



RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS

Hansard Home Page: <http://www.parliament.qld.gov.au/work-of-assembly/hansard>
 Email: hansard@parliament.qld.gov.au
 Phone (07) 3553 6344 Fax (07) 3553 6369

FIRST SESSION OF THE FIFTY-FIFTH PARLIAMENT

Wednesday, 16 September 2015

Subject	Page
PRIVILEGE	1839
Speaker's Ruling, Alleged Deliberate Misleading of the House by a Minister	1839
<i>Tabled paper.</i> Correspondence, dated July 2015, relating to an alleged deliberate misleading of the House by the Minister for Education and Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Small Business and the Commonwealth Games.	1839
SPEAKER'S STATEMENT	1839
Where's William? Week	1839
SPEAKER'S RULING	1840
Same Question Rule	1840
DISTINGUISHED VISITOR	1840
PETITIONS	1840
TABLED PAPER	1841
MINISTERIAL PAPER	1841
Revocation of Marine Park Area	1841
<i>Tabled paper:</i> Revocation of State Areas: Proposal under section 9 of the Marine Parks Act 2004 and a brief explanation of the proposal.	1841
<i>Tabled paper:</i> Revocation of State Areas: Proposal under section 9 of the Marine Parks Act 2004—map of proposed area of revocation.	1841
NOTICE OF MOTION	1841
Revocation of Marine Park Area	1841
MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS	1842
DVConnect	1842
Chief Justice Catherine Holmes, Appointment	1842
Bundaberg, Community Cabinet Meeting	1842
Social Media, Use of Images	1843
Infrastructure Projects, Funding	1843
<i>Tabled paper:</i> Economic Development Queensland: Catalyst Infrastructure Program—Program Guidelines, July 2015.	1843

Table of Contents – Wednesday, 16 September 2015

Skilling Queenslanders for Work.....	1844
Domestic and Family Violence	1844
Skilling Queenslanders for Work.....	1844
eHealth Investment Strategy; National Stroke Week.....	1845
Tourism Industry	1846
North Queensland, Economic Forums.....	1846
Vegetation Management	1847
National Police Remembrance Day	1848
Racing Queensland	1848
Renewable Energy Reverse Auction.....	1849
MOTION	1850
Referral to the Health and Ambulance Services Committee.....	1850
COMMITTEE OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY	1850
Report	1850
<i>Tabled paper:</i> Committee of the Legislative Assembly: Report No. 14—Report on the 2015 Budget Estimates process	1850
NOTICES OF MOTION.....	1850
Disallowance of Statutory Instrument.....	1850
Ethics Committee	1850
PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS.....	1850
Labor Party, Unions	1850
<i>Tabled paper:</i> Photograph, undated, of the Premier, Hon Anastacia Palaszczuk, and another person	1851
Infrastructure Projects	1851
Queensland Economy, Infrastructure Projects	1852
Queensland Economy, Market Led Proposals	1852
Racing Industry	1853
QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE	1854
Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services	1854
Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services	1854
Turnbull Coalition Government	1855
Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services.....	1855
Townsville Stadium.....	1855
Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services.....	1856
Townsville City Waterfront Priority Development Area	1856
Disclosure of Political Donations	1857
Apprentices and Trainees.....	1858
Disclosure of Political Donations	1858
Queensland Health	1859
Disclosure of Political Donations	1860
National Broadband Network, Rural Students.....	1860
Country Racing.....	1861
Mining Industry, Red-Tape Reduction.....	1862
Racing Queensland.....	1862
Skilling Queenslanders for Work.....	1863
Multicultural Affairs, Employment.....	1864
Tenants' Advice and Referral Service.....	1864
Bruce Highway, Caloundra Road to Sunshine Motorway Upgrade Project.....	1865
Infrastructure Projects	1866
PRIVILEGE.....	1866
Alleged Deliberate Misleading of the House by a Minister	1866
<i>Tabled paper:</i> Electoral Commission of Queensland Disclosure Return—Donor to Candidate (Yvette D'Ath) in the name of CEPU Plumbing Division of Queensland, dated 2 June 2014.....	1866
<i>Tabled paper:</i> Electoral Commission of Queensland Disclosure Return—Registered Political Party (Australian Labor Party State of Queensland), for the period 1 July 2013 to 30 June 2014.	1866
TRANSPORT LEGISLATION (TAXI SERVICES) AMENDMENT BILL	1866
Introduction	1866
<i>Tabled paper:</i> Transport Legislation (Taxi Services) Amendment Bill 2015.	1867
<i>Tabled paper:</i> Transport Legislation (Taxi Services) Amendment Bill 2015, explanatory notes.	1867
<i>Tabled paper:</i> Non-conforming petition regarding illegal taxi services in Queensland.....	1867
First Reading	1869
Referral to the Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources Committee	1869
APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL (NO. 2).....	1869
Message from Governor	1869
<i>Tabled paper:</i> Message, dated 15 September 2015, from His Excellency the Governor, recommending the Appropriation (Parliament) Bill (No. 2) 2015.....	1869
Introduction	1869
<i>Tabled paper:</i> Message, dated 15 September 2015, from His Excellency the Governor, recommending the Appropriation Bill (No. 2) 2015.	1869
<i>Tabled paper:</i> Appropriation (Parliament) Bill (No. 2) 2015, explanatory notes.....	1869
First Reading	1869
Referral to the Finance and Administration Committee.....	1870
Portfolio Committee, Reporting Date	1870

Table of Contents – Wednesday, 16 September 2015

APPROPRIATION BILL (NO. 2)	1870
Message from Governor	1870
<i>Tabled paper:</i> Message from the Governor regarding the Appropriation Bill (No. 2) 2015.	1870
Introduction	1870
<i>Tabled paper:</i> Appropriation Bill (No. 2) 2015.	1870
<i>Tabled paper:</i> Appropriation Bill (No. 2) 2015, explanatory notes.....	1870
First Reading	1871
Referral to the Finance and Administration Committee	1871
Portfolio Committee, Reporting Date	1871
JOBS QUEENSLAND BILL	1871
Introduction	1871
<i>Tabled paper:</i> Jobs Queensland Bill 2015.	1871
<i>Tabled paper:</i> Jobs Queensland Bill 2015, explanatory notes.....	1871
First Reading	1873
Referral to the Education, Tourism and Small Business Committee	1873
Portfolio Committee, Reporting Date	1873
COUNTER-TERRORISM AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL	1873
Introduction	1873
<i>Tabled paper:</i> Counter-Terrorism and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2015.	1873
<i>Tabled paper:</i> Counter-Terrorism and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2015, explanatory notes.	1873
First Reading	1875
Referral to the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee	1875
Portfolio Committee, Reporting Date	1875
MOTION	1876
Order of Business	1876
MOTION	1876
Yeerongpilly Transit Oriented Development, State Planning Regulatory Provision	1876
HEAVY VEHICLE NATIONAL LAW AMENDMENT BILL	1877
Second Reading	1877
Consideration in Detail	1887
Clauses 1 to 67, as read, agreed to.	1887
Schedule, as read, agreed to	1887
Third Reading	1887
Long Title	1887
MOTION	1887
Ethics Committee	1887
Division: Question put—That the motion be agreed to.	1893
Resolved in the negative.	1893
MINISTERIAL STATEMENT	1893
Further Answer to Question; Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services	1893
PROCLAMATION MADE UNDER THE WATER REFORM AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT ACT	1894
Disallowance of Statutory Instrument	1894
Division: Question put—That the motion be agreed to.	1902
Resolved in the negative.	1902
WORKERS' COMPENSATION AND REHABILITATION AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL; WORKERS' COMPENSATION AND REHABILITATION (PROTECTING FIREFIGHTERS) AMENDMENT BILL	1902
Second Reading (Cognate Debate)	1902
<i>Tabled paper:</i> Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation Amendment Regulation (No. ..) 2015, Tabling Draft.....	1903
<i>Tabled paper:</i> Finance and Administration Committee: Report No. 8, 55th Parliament—Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2015, government response.	1905
<i>Tabled paper:</i> Email, dated 16 September 2015, from the Director, Advocacy & Workplace Relations, Chamber of Commerce & Industry Queensland, Mr Nick Behrens, to Members of the Queensland Legislative Assembly, regarding the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2015.	1910
<i>Tabled paper:</i> Media article, undated, titled 'Obituary, Funeral for a friend'.	1934
<i>Tabled paper:</i> Article from the <i>Fassifern Guardian</i> , dated 17 September 2014, titled 'A man devoted to family and community'.	1934
ADJOURNMENT	1950
Pumicestone Electorate, School Chaplaincy	1950
Multiculturalism	1951
Going for Gold in September for Childhood Cancer	1951
Wilsonton State High School, Arts and Sports Hall	1952
Holland Park State High School	1952
Moggill Scout Group, Kenmore Girl Guides	1953
World Arts & Multi-Culture Inc.	1954
Visiting Medical Officers	1954
Domestic and Family Violence	1955
Nanango Electorate, Celebrating Lynda	1955
ATTENDANCE	1956

WEDNESDAY, 16 SEPTEMBER 2015



The Legislative Assembly met at 2.00 pm.

Mr Speaker (Hon. Peter Wellington, Nicklin) read prayers and took the chair.

PRIVILEGE

Speaker's Ruling, Alleged Deliberate Misleading of the House by a Minister



Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, on 17 July 2015 the Leader of Opposition Business wrote to me alleging that the Minister for Education and Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Small Business and the Commonwealth Games deliberately misled the House. I have circulated a ruling on this matter. I have decided that the matter does not warrant the further attention of the House via the Ethics Committee and I will not be referring the matter. I seek leave to incorporate the ruling in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

SPEAKER'S RULING—ALLEGED DELIBERATELY MISLEADING THE HOUSE

MR SPEAKER: Honourable Members,

On 17 July 2015, the Leader of Opposition Business wrote to me alleging that the Minister for Education and Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Small Business and the Commonwealth Games deliberately misled the House when she stated that:

Before I get on to an issue that I am passionate about, which is tourism, can I just remind the Leader of the Opposition and the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, 'Public servants, your jobs are safe.' And how many were sacked?

Twenty-four thousand of them were sacked after they stood there and said that their jobs would be safe.

And

I was just recalling for everybody in the House that in their first budget they said to the people of Queensland, specifically to the public servants of Queensland, 'Your jobs would be safe. You have nothing to fear.' And what did their first budget deliver? Because of them, 24,000 people on the scrap heap.

In his letter to me, the Leader of Opposition Business stated that the references to a sacking of 24,000 are proven factually incorrect. The Leader of Opposition Business also contended that the Minister's use of this figure was deliberately misleading.

I note that on 15 September 2015 the Minister made a Personal Explanation which stated that:

I would like to clarify comments I made on 14 July, when I stated that 24,000 public servants had been sacked. I now understand that up to 24,000 jobs were lost across the Public Service, other public sector funded positions and in the broader community.

Standing Order 269(4) requires:

In considering whether the matter should be referred to the committee, the Speaker shall take account of the degree of importance of the matter which has been raised and whether an adequate apology or explanation has been made in respect of the matter. No matter should be referred to the ethics committee if the matter is technical or trivial and does not warrant the further attention of the House.

Given the Minister's statement of clarification to the House, I am satisfied that the Minister has made an adequate explanation and clarification.

Accordingly, I have decided that the matter does not warrant the further attention of the House via the Ethics Committee and I will not be referring the matter.

I would however, take the opportunity to remind all members to ensure that their statements made in the House or its committees are accurate and that all members choose their words judiciously.

I table the correspondence in relation to this matter.

Tabled paper: Correspondence, dated July 2015, relating to an alleged deliberate misleading of the House by the Minister for Education and Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Small Business and the Commonwealth Games [[1072](#)].

SPEAKER'S STATEMENT

Where's William? Week



Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I advise members that 12 September was the anniversary of the disappearance of William Tyrell, who disappeared from his grandmother's home in Kendall, New South Wales on 12 September 2014. Where's William? Week runs from 12 to 18 September. William's parents, in partnership with Bravehearts Inc., have invited members to raise awareness of William this week by wearing a red and blue 'Where's William?' ribbon on their lapel.

SPEAKER'S RULING

Same Question Rule

 **Mr SPEAKER:** Honourable members, I have ordered that a ruling regarding the application of the same question rule to cognate bills be circulated. I seek leave to incorporate the ruling in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

SAME QUESTION RULE—APPLICATION OF SAME QUESTION RULE TO COGNATE BILLS

The Member for Kawana introduced the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation (Protecting Firefighters) Amendment Bill 2015 on 3 June 2015.

The Treasurer, Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships introduced the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2015 on 15 July 2015. The Bill deals with a variety of matters, but relevantly includes matters dealt with in the Member for Kawana's Bill.

The relevant provisions of the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill and the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation (Protecting Firefighters) Amendment Bill introduce a scheme of deemed diseases for firefighters to seek compensation for the same specified cancers contracted after a specified time working as a firefighter.

While the government bill proposes a different threshold for volunteer firefighters than the Member for Kawana's bill, the substance of the issue is the same; the provision of a compensation scheme for firefighters, both employed and volunteer—it is how the policy objectives are achieved that differs.

Standing Order 87(1) provides that unless the Standing Orders otherwise provide, a question or amendment shall not be proposed which is the same as any question which, during the same session, has been resolved in the affirmative or negative. A number of Speaker rulings in relation to this issue have been made in recent years. In summary:

- the matters do not have to be identical, merely the same in substance as the previous matter. In other words, it is a question of substance, not form;
- there is no rule preventing the presentation of two bills on the same subject, or indeed opposite intent. However, if a decision of the House has already been taken on one bill, the other is not to be proceeded upon; and
- an amendment cannot be moved to a bill that has already been moved to another bill and defeated or is substantially the same as a bill that has been defeated.

I am satisfied that the bills seek to achieve the same objective and the same question rule is enlivened. Therefore, it is necessary to consider how the bills should be proceeded with. I foreshadow that the second reading question for the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2015 (the government bill) will be put first.

At that point I will immediately make a ruling in relation to the application of the same question rule for the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation (Protecting Firefighters) Amendment Bill 2015.

If the government bill passes its second reading, the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation (Protecting Firefighters) Amendment Bill 2015 would then be discharged from the Notice Paper, as the ruling would not allow any further decisions to be made on that bill. As there will have been no decision taken in relation to the clauses in the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation (Protecting Firefighters) Amendment Bill 2015, members can move amendments to the government bill to deal with the matters contained in the private member's bill.

DISTINGUISHED VISITOR

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I welcome the Right Reverend Chris Sutton to the public gallery to observe our proceedings.

PETITIONS

The Clerk presented the following paper petitions lodged by the honourable members indicated—

Toowoomba State High School, Wilsonton Campus

Mr Watts, from 313 petitioners, requesting the House to fund the construction of an Arts and Sports Hall at Toowoomba State High School, Wilsonton Campus [[1073](#)].

Maryborough Hospital, Pathology Unit

Mr Saunders, from 7,920 petitioners, requesting the House to restore the Pathology Department at the Maryborough Hospital to a functioning pathology unit [[1074](#)].

Moreton Bay Rail Construction Corridor

Mr Whiting, from 313 petitioners, requesting the House to require that the scope of the investigation being conducted by SMEC be expanded, urgently, to include the whole of the Moreton Bay Rail construction corridor [[1075](#)].

Taxi Services

Mr Katter, two petitions, from 2,131 petitioners, requesting the House to make amendments to the Transport Operations (Passenger Transport) Act 1994 to make the Queensland Police Service responsible for the issuance of fines and demerit points to all persons undertaking illegal taxi work as defined by the Act [[1076](#), [1077](#)].

The Clerk presented the following paper petition, sponsored by the Clerk in accordance with Standing Order 119(3)—

Key Resource Areas and Transport Corridors, Amendments

134 petitioners, requesting the House to review the process by which amendments are made to Key Resource Areas and Transport Corridors and to rescind the revised KRA83 back to the proposed version dated February 2013 [[1078](#)].

The Clerk presented the following e-petitions, sponsored by the honourable member indicated—

Labrador State School, School Zone Flashing Lights

Miss Barton, from 24 petitioners, requesting the House to reinstate funding for flashing school zone lights at Labrador State School on Government Road and have them installed as a matter of priority [[1079](#)].

The Clerk presented the following e-petition, sponsored by the Clerk in accordance with Standing Order 119(4)—

Net-Free Fishing Zones

277 petitioners, requesting the House to block legislation that introduces resource allocation through the establishment of net-free fishing zones in Queensland [[1080](#)].

Petitions received.

TABLED PAPER

MEMBER'S PAPER TABLED BY THE CLERK

The following member's paper was tabled by the Clerk—

Member for Toowoomba North (Mr Watts)—

[1081](#) Non-conforming petition requesting a hall at Wilsonton State High School

MINISTERIAL PAPER

Revocation of Marine Park Area

 **Hon. SJ MILES** (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (Minister for Environment and Heritage Protection and Minister for National Parks and the Great Barrier Reef) (2.05 pm): I lay upon the table of the House a proposal under section 9 of the Marine Parks Act 2004 and a brief explanation of the proposal.

Tabled paper: Revocation of State Areas: Proposal under section 9 of the Marine Parks Act 2004 and a brief explanation of the proposal [[1082](#)].

Tabled paper: Revocation of State Areas: Proposal under section 9 of the Marine Parks Act 2004—map of proposed area of revocation [[1083](#)].

NOTICE OF MOTION

Revocation of Marine Park Area

 **Hon. SJ MILES** (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (Minister for Environment and Heritage Protection and Minister for National Parks and the Great Barrier Reef) (2.05 pm): I give notice that, after the expiration of at least 28 days as provided in the Marine Parks Act 2004, I shall move—

- 1) That this House requests the Governor in Council to revoke by regulation under section 9 of the Marine Parks Act 2004 the declaration as marine park of the area as set out in the proposal tabled by me in the House today viz

Description of area to be revoked

Great Sandy Marine Park

Area described as Unallocated State Land adjacent to Lions Park (Lot 5 on CP880110) within the Burrum River at Burrum Heads and containing an area of 2.2 hectares of tidal lands and tidal waters as illustrated on the attached sketch.

- 2) That Mr Speaker and The Clerk of the Parliament forward a copy of this resolution to the Minister for Environment and Heritage Protection and Minister for National Parks and the Great Barrier Reef for submission to the Governor in Council."

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

DVConnect

 **Hon. A PALASZCZUK** (Inala—ALP) (Premier and Minister for the Arts) (2.06 pm): In May this year my government gave an extra \$1.5 million to the domestic violence crisis support service DVConnect to help them deal with a spike in the number of calls for help. Then we had the events of last week—sudden public acts of domestic violence which put a spotlight on the horrors that might be happening behind closed doors.

I spoke to Di Mangan from DVConnect, and we discussed how these incidents could lead to an increase in cries for help received by her organisation. I told her that, if she needed more help, my government was there to provide that support. As we forecast, DVConnect have seen calls double. On Monday and Tuesday this week they broke a new distressing record. I am advised that they received more than 400 calls on each day.

It goes without saying that more calls to DVConnect means more resources are required to deal with them. When a woman or a man finds the courage to pick up the phone and ask for help, it needs to be answered. And it must be answered by professionals who can provide the support the person needs. At my request, Di and her team put in a considered request for more staffing. I am proud to announce today that my government will be providing DVConnect with an extra \$1.2 million in funding this year. This will mean four more crisis intervention counsellors and extra funds for people seeking assistance leaving their home, including emergency accommodation, transport, food, clothing and medical needs. That brings my government's total commitment to DVConnect to \$5.1 million, and that is about 97 per cent of their funding.

This is a statewide service. Di tells me that workers are trained to be geographically familiar with all of the state, including remote areas and every island of the Torres Strait. DVConnect flies a person to safety from somewhere in Queensland every three days. It provides crisis response for women, children and men—sometimes emergency housing, sometimes just helpful information, sometimes helping a victim plan their long-term escape.

DVConnect provides a Womensline, a Mensline, a Sexual Assault Helpline, a Pets in Crisis program and a training arm. There has been an increase in calls to DVConnect and the response that we are providing is indeed the right and necessary thing to do. It means that the news coverage of what is happening is encouraging victims to speak out, to take the crucial steps they need to escape their personal hell. DVConnect is there to help, and my government is there to provide that assistance. Their number should be shared far and wide—1800811811.

Chief Justice Catherine Holmes, Appointment

 **Hon. A PALASZCZUK** (Inala—ALP) (Premier and Minister for the Arts) (2.10 pm): Last Friday, the new Chief Justice of Queensland was sworn in in a ceremony in the Banco Court at the QEII Courts of Law. It was standing room only in both the Banco and the second standby court. Chief Justice Catherine Holmes has been appointed as the Chief Justice of Queensland. Born in Brisbane and attending Our Ladies at Corinda and the then newly opened Oxley State High School, Justice Holmes acquired an impressive range of academic qualifications, including Bachelor of Economics, Bachelor of Laws, Graduate Diploma of Legal Practice, Bachelor of Arts (Hons) and Master of Laws.

Her Honour was admitted as a solicitor of the Supreme Court of Queensland in 1982 and a barrister two years later. Following her appointment to the trial division of the Supreme Court in 2000, she quickly impressed with her considered approach to judgements, her courtesy and good nature in court, and her willingness to listen and to assist in the development of arguments of advocates appearing before her. Her administrative and management skills were also appreciated in her carriage of the criminal list from 2001 to 2004 and as presiding judge of the Mental Health Court from 2005 to 2006. Justice Holmes was elevated to the Court of Appeal in 2006 and served there with distinction until accepting the position of Chief Justice of Queensland. I wish her all the best in her new role.

Bundaberg, Community Cabinet Meeting

 **Hon. A PALASZCZUK** (Inala—ALP) (Premier and Minister for the Arts) (2.11 pm): I said that I would be a Premier for the whole of Queensland. To make that happen, my government and my cabinet needs to be out and about across the state as often as we can. That is why I am delighted to report to

the House that my government will hold its fourth two-day community cabinet meeting in Bundaberg on 18 and 19 October. I know that this will impress the member for Bundaberg, who has been advocating with me to hold this community cabinet in her electorate for a considerable amount of time.

This government is committed to supporting the Wide Bay region. A community cabinet in this very important part of Queensland will provide an opportunity for locals to sit down face to face with ministers and heads of government departments to discuss the issues important to them. They can also ask me questions!

The Wide Bay region is vital to our state's economy, particularly around agriculture and tourism, as the southern gateway for Great Barrier Reef tourism. I travelled there as opposition leader, it was the first regional Queensland town I visited as Premier, and I look forward to returning. I am particularly looking forward to discussing with the local community how my government can support business and industry in this dynamic region.

A public forum will be held in Bundaberg on Sunday, 18 October starting at 1 pm at the Bundaberg Civic Centre. This will be immediately followed by formal deputations, which will be taken by ministers and directors-general of government departments in the civic centre from 2.15 to 4.30. I encourage community members, organisations and businesses to come along and have their say by participating in the open forum or by arranging a formal deputation with me or any of my cabinet colleagues.

Social Media, Use of Images

 **Hon. A PALASZCZUK** (Inala—ALP) (Premier and Minister for the Arts) (2.12 pm): An issue has been brought to my attention regarding the use of photos on social media. My understanding is that some photos of government workers have been posted on social media without the workers' express permission. While those individual workers did provide permission for their image to be used in a government document, permission had not been sought for the same images to be used on social media, and for that the government apologises. I understand that it was an honest mistake. As soon as I was notified this morning I directed that any such images be removed from social media, and the individuals responsible for the mistake are being counselled.

Infrastructure Projects, Funding

 **Hon. JA TRAD** (South Brisbane—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Minister for Transport, Minister for Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning and Minister for Trade) (2.13 pm): This government is committed to economic development and job creation and is constantly looking to achieve this with innovative ideas to help local communities. I am pleased today to announce a new catalyst infrastructure program which will provide more than \$59 million over the next three years to invest in road, water, sewerage, stormwater or other infrastructure that unlocks development and creates construction and long-term employment. I table a copy of the guidelines for the benefit of the parliament.

Tabled paper: Economic Development Queensland: Catalyst Infrastructure Program—Program Guidelines, July 2015 [[1084](#)].

In many cases development can be impeded by the lack of critical infrastructure. This funding will help facilitate or accelerate development by providing co-investment for the timely completion of catalytic infrastructure. Managed by Economic Development Queensland, this program will partner with local governments and in some cases developers and industry to invest in infrastructure projects that unlock development opportunities. It replaces the previous priority development infrastructure co-investment program, which linked funding eligibility to councils' adoption of the fair value schedule of charges. This meant that almost 20 major growth councils were not eligible to be part of the program unless they adopted the charges. Under the catalyst infrastructure program, all councils are eligible to seek co-investment funds as well as private proponents.

In order for projects to be considered eligible for the catalyst infrastructure program, the proposed infrastructure must generate, facilitate or accelerate economic benefit. The proponent must also co-invest between 10 and 50 per cent of the total direct costs and be ready to commence construction within 12 months. This will ensure jobs are at the centre of this initiative. The funds co-invested by EDQ will be provided to the proponent interest free and, to assist in the sustainable funding of the program, the government will generally be seeking a repayment of all the funds from co-investors over time.

EDQ is currently in discussions with a number of councils in relation to potential infrastructure projects which could qualify under the program. Today I invite further submissions for consideration. Councils and private proponents can find out more information from the EDQ website—and I encourage them to do so—to work in partnership with the Palaszczuk Labor government to drive economic growth and job creation right around our state.

Skilling Queenslanders for Work

 **Hon. CW PITT** (Mulgrave—ALP) (Treasurer, Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships) (2.15 pm): Visiting Queensland's rural and remote Indigenous communities is something I am very passionate about. In the final week of August I visited the Woorabinda community in central Queensland to announce a groundbreaking deal between Woorabinda Aboriginal Shire Council and three leading resources companies. The multimillion dollar deal will see Woorabinda Aboriginal Shire Council manage more than 500 hectares of threatened Brigalow Belt land as biodiversity offsets. Council will carry out this important environmental initiative on behalf of Cockatoo Coal, BHP Billiton Mitsubishi Alliance and BHP BillitonMitsui.

This deal is a win for everyone involved, delivering on environmental protection, supporting long-term job opportunities for locals, and providing for the development of this great Indigenous community. The ancient custodians of this land now have an opportunity to undertake meaningful work protecting our unique environments and strengthening their connection to country. In particular, the project will provide for the protection of the vulnerable ornamental snake, the vulnerable squatter pigeon, the vulnerable long-eared bat and the endangered solanum species of plant. With over 500 hectares being protected under the agreements, these partnerships mark a significant achievement for environmental conservation in Queensland. It is the first of what I hope will be many similar agreements enabling Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to provide environmental management services to companies throughout Australia.

On the weekend the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships' new cultural heritage online portal won a prestigious ICT award at the Spatial Excellence Awards. The portal assembles information and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural heritage in a central and accessible location. It is a vital tool in preserving Queensland's proud Indigenous cultural heritage. It is also an important research and planning tool which assists Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and others to assess the cultural heritage values of particular Indigenous areas. The benefits of the new portal are enormous for land users, for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parties and for future generations of Queenslanders. I congratulate DATSIP for developing this important new resource and for winning this prestigious award.

Domestic and Family Violence

 **Hon. CW PITT** (Mulgrave—ALP) (Treasurer, Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships) (2.17 pm): Recent tragic events have further highlighted the serious issue of family and domestic violence and the need to come together as a community to put an end to it in Queensland and across Australia. Last month I had the privilege of chairing the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men's leaders round table in Cairns. At the round table I met with 22 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men who were elders and leaders in their communities. The group acknowledges the need for a concerted effort to tackle the scourge of domestic violence. Those present gave a personal pledge that violence in any form is never to be tolerated. Following the Premier's strong leadership on this issue, I will continue to work with all Indigenous communities to tackle domestic and family violence.

Skilling Queenslanders for Work

 **Hon. YM D'ATH** (Redcliffe—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for Training and Skills) (2.18 pm): The Palaszczuk government is proud of its commitment to jobs and to growing an appropriately skilled workforce to meet industry demand now and into the future. A significant commitment of this government was to reinstate Skilling Queenslanders for Work, a successful initiative cut by the former LNP government despite the proven positive outcomes it delivers. This government is investing \$240 million over four years to assist up to 32,000 Queenslanders back into work through a suite of targeted skills and training programs.

Last week I had the pleasure of announcing the successful applicants for the first round of the Skilling Queenslanders for Work initiative for 2015-16, with 200 organisations around the state to share in over \$26 million. Mr Speaker, this government committed to assisting up to 8,000 people annually through the new Skilling Queenslanders for Work initiative, and I am very excited to let you know that in this first round of funding for 2015-16 we will have already exceeded this commitment, with 8,126 individuals gaining assistance this round alone.

We had an overwhelming number of applicants for this round of funding—a testament to the success of the prior Skilling Queenslanders for Work program that was axed by the former government. I would like to thank the Department of Education and Training for their tireless efforts in working through the 550 applications they received, and I thank the regional committees for their work in identifying projects that meet the needs of their communities. Skilling Queenslanders for Work puts regions in the driving seat, and we believe that locals are best placed to identify the training and employment needs in their area.

While it was exciting to announce the recipients last week, I am also aware that a significant number of applicants were not successful in their applications in this first round. These organisations will have received a letter by now identifying the main reasons their applications were rejected and they are encouraged to contact the department via the email address provided to seek further feedback specific to their submission. Applications for the next round of funding have already opened and will remain open until 12 November 2015. I encourage all MPs to contact their community groups and not-for-profit organisations and let them know that there is still an opportunity to receive Skilling Queenslanders for Work funding in 2015-16.

The former LNP government refused to acknowledge the vital role played by the community sector in Queensland. They demonstrated this in their first budget, where we saw them rip over \$360 million over four years from the sector that helps the most vulnerable in the state. This has affected community groups across the state, forcing them to make staff cuts and reduce service delivery. These staff cuts have led to organisations having reduced capacity to write applications and to meet the requirements of program delivery. This capacity will take time to rebuild. For this reason, I encourage smaller not-for-profits to consider collaborating and creating programs that encompass the strengths of organisations. This reduces both the financial burden and the man hours required to develop and deliver a quality program. I again encourage members to get in touch with their local organisations and let them know the opportunities available through Skilling Queenslanders for Work so we can gain the best outcome for Queenslanders.

eHealth Investment Strategy; National Stroke Week

 **Hon. CR DICK** (Woodridge—ALP) (Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services) (2.22 pm): As honourable members would be aware, Queensland's health system is under pressure, with federal funding cuts coming at a time when the state's population is not only growing but also ageing. There has always been an imperative to have a system run as efficiently as possible, but the looming circumstances make such efficiencies imperative.

In the drive for efficiency, at the beginning of August, I announced the creation of eHealth Queensland. eHealth Queensland combines the Health Services Information Agency and the Office of the Chief Health Information Officer to form a single strong agency. But its aim is to drive efficiencies within the system through the use of new information and communications technology which will allow our clinicians on the front line to spend more time on patient care. A major part of this is a 20-year vision for ICT investment in health which provides a clear pathway to the delivery of a new integrated ICT framework for Queensland Health.

It also, significantly, responds to the first recommendation of the Chesterman commission of inquiry into payroll—something which, despite three years in the job, the member for Southern Downs, Lawrence Springborg, never got around to doing. The eHealth Investment Strategy details the priority investment needed in four primary categories—clinical systems, business systems, ICT infrastructure and the digital future of Queensland Health. With respect to the last element, I can tell the House that we are well on the way to having Queensland's first digital hospital in the public sector later this year when Princess Alexandra Hospital comes on line. This strategy was developed in partnership with all 16 hospital and health services so we can have an equitable distribution of ICT funding across the state.

One element is a greater use of telehealth facilities. While we will continue to use telehealth facilities to bring health services to remote areas, telehealth can also be used to meet the high volume of demand in regional Queensland. Through the implementation of the eHealth initiatives detailed in our strategy, we anticipate approximately 1,000 jobs will be created. The strategy also addresses risks which are already in the system but have not been addressed. It also ensures a greater level of

integration between both public and private health service providers and the community. We see a large role for the private sector in delivering some of the innovations. We want to find a way to partner with the private sector to find ways to deliver reform for less. What we have provided with this eHealth strategy is certainty for the private sector. We have a plan for the way forward in eHealth—a plan that will ensure Queensland delivers a patient-centric system that enables different models of care as close to home as possible.

Mr Speaker, every 10 minutes, someone in Australia has a stroke. Stroke is the second most common cause of death, as well as a major cause of long-term disability and dependence in adults. This week is National Stroke Week, and I would urge honourable members to do what they can to make their constituents aware of the dangers of strokes. I myself will be having my blood pressure checked on Friday at the Logan Central Plaza shopping centre, right in the heart of Woodridge, as part of National Stroke Week.

Opposition member interjected.

Mr DICK: Thank you. I take the interjection from the member opposite. When I checked last time, the ticker was very strong. I urge all honourable members, including the member for Mermaid Beach, to support National Stroke Week.

Mr SPEAKER: Before calling the Minister for Education, I inform members that we have students from the Cannon Hill Anglican College in the electorate of Bulimba observing our proceedings from the public gallery.

Tourism Industry

 **Hon. KJ JONES** (Ashgrove—ALP) (Minister for Education and Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Small Business and the Commonwealth Games) (2.25 pm): It is wonderful to have those students here. I had the pleasure of meeting them at lunchtime today. They are bright young Queenslanders who undoubtedly will go on to a great future when they finish school this year.

The Palaszczuk government is committed to growing tourism in our state because we know that tourism growth means jobs. I can report to the House that new data released today by Tourism Research Australia shows domestic travel to Queensland reached 19.1 million visitors during the past financial year—a six per cent increase, or almost half a million more visitors than the year prior. This is the highest level of domestic travel in Queensland since 1999. Today's tourism data builds on recent growth in international travel, with total travel to Queensland during this financial year reaching 21.3 million visitors, up six per cent.

Opposition members interjected.

Ms JONES: I take the interjections from those opposite supporting the tourism industry here in Queensland and the great work that is happening.

Ms Trad: Unlike yesterday.

Ms JONES: Unlike yesterday. Good point. Visitor expenditure was \$18.3 billion, up three per cent. Tourism and Events Queensland is working in partnership with industry and regional tourism organisations on a series of destination marketing campaigns to increase travel throughout this state. Business related travel also increased by 28 per cent, to 4.4 million during the financial year.

The Palaszczuk government is determined to grow tourism in Queensland and the 230,000 Queensland jobs it supports. We are now just 22 days away from the Palaszczuk government's DestinationQ forum that will be held in Townsville, and I cannot wait to see all the local members up there supporting this. The forum will bring together more than 400 industry and government leaders. It will draw on new research about what visitors want from their Queensland experience, with experienced speakers focusing on industry and government and how Queensland will deliver consumer expectations. This government is committed to growing tourism, and today's new data shows that we are on the right track.

North Queensland, Economic Forums

 **Hon. CJ O'ROURKE** (Mundingburra—ALP) (Minister for Disability Services, Minister for Seniors and Minister Assisting the Premier on North Queensland) (2.27 pm): The Palaszczuk government understands how important jobs are for the region and, in particular, jobs for North Queensland. A key part of my role as Minister Assisting the Premier on North Queensland is to explore economic development and infrastructure priorities in the north. These are important opportunities that will ultimately lead to more jobs for the region. We know that the key to creating these jobs is listening to what locals have to say about development in their region.

To do this, I am consulting extensively with local people, business leaders, peak bodies and local government leaders from throughout North Queensland. As part of my commitment to engaging with North Queensland stakeholders, I am hosting five business round tables to discuss issues and opportunities for the region. I have already hosted two of those round tables, and I was joined by the Premier at the first round table in Cairns. I am pleased to update the House that, since our last sitting, I hosted a second round table in Townsville last month. Topics at the round tables have been quite diverse and comprehensive, ranging from aviation routes, export opportunities, port development, agriculture, water security, tropical expertise and branding for North Queensland.

The feedback, ideas and suggestions discussed at the round tables are being collated by the Department of the Premier and Cabinet and will be used to identify up to five key projects that I will champion for the region. These will be projects that will stimulate growth and create jobs for the north. I am also pleased to advise the House that the next economic round table will be held in Mackay on 7 October. I know the member for Mackay has been keen to attend so she can hear firsthand from business leaders in her community.

In addition to the upcoming round tables, we have more exciting events on the horizon in North Queensland. In November the Premier and I are heading to Cairns to host a North Queensland economic summit. The summit from 4 to 6 November will showcase to investors that Northern Queensland is open for business. I know how excited the Premier is about the summit, which we heard her speak about in the House yesterday.

We know that North Queenslanders are passionate about their region. That is why we are making sure that they have their say on creating local jobs for the future.

Mr Cripps interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Hinchinbrook, you will have ample opportunities to question the ministers later this afternoon. I call the Minister for State Development and Minister for Natural Resources and Mines.

Vegetation Management

 **Hon. AJ LYNHAM** (Stafford—ALP) (Minister for State Development and Minister for Natural Resources and Mines) (2.30 pm): The Palaszczuk government appreciates the central role of vegetation management in protecting the Great Barrier Reef, reducing carbon emissions, securing our biodiversity and maintaining sustainable agricultural industries and the thousands of jobs they support. We have made an election commitment on vegetation management and we will deliver.

Today I can detail a five-point package of measures that are maintaining the balance that this government seeks in all of its policy making—the balance of economic, environmental and community benefit. First off the mark was a legislative amendment which, from 1 September, has meant changes to clearing for community infrastructure. The LNP had made clearing for community infrastructure exempt from assessment under the state's planning framework without specifying exactly what the community infrastructure might be. From 1 September community infrastructure clearing is only exempt if the land is designated for actual community infrastructure. I have said previously in this chamber that I support the use of 15 different self-assessable codes. The second point of our vegetation management package focuses on these codes and their effectiveness.

I have tasked my Department of Natural Resources and Mines with liaising with stakeholders on a health check of these codes to ensure they are meeting their goals. Early indications from a recent audit of self-assessed clearing are encouraging, showing that only three per cent of properties inspected potentially were not complying with clearing rules. Further, I am working on an independently chaired vegetation round table comprising representatives of agricultural industries, conservation and Indigenous groups. For the first time all of these interest groups have a forum where, together, they can share views and nut out issues together.

Next out of the blocks will be a new vegetation monitoring system that will make it easier for farmers, government and third parties to prevent unauthorised clearing. The new system is soon to be trialled with industry stakeholders. It will use the latest satellite images of the state to spot changes in land cover and potentially unauthorised clearing and assist landholders, most importantly, in identifying where they can legally clear.

Finally, I have asked my department to review the state policy for vegetation management to ensure that it is consistent with the purpose of the Vegetation Management Act. This is tangible evidence of our considered approach to a complex issue compared to the 'bull at a gate' approach of those opposite when in government.

National Police Remembrance Day

 **Hon. JR MILLER** (Bundamba—ALP) (Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services and Minister for Corrective Services) (2.33 pm): Every September communities across Queensland pause to reflect on the sacrifices that our police women and men make in the line of duty. In the lead-up to National Police Remembrance Day on 29 September, officers from across Australia converge on the nation's capital to remember their fallen mates and raise much needed funds for Police Legacy. The year 2015 was the sixth year the Wall to Wall Ride for Remembrance has been run across Australia and I was honoured to take part in two special ceremonies as part of this event. Last Wednesday, a large contingent of police motorcycle riders left the Queensland Police Service Academy to join more than 2,000 others taking part. A group representing each Australian policing jurisdiction travelled with a baton from their capital city to Canberra for a ceremony at the National Police Memorial. Each baton was engraved with that state's emblem and held a scroll bearing the names of those officers who had died in the line of duty over the past year. Thankfully, this year Queensland's baton was empty, but it paid tribute to the fallen officers from past years whose memories will live on.

Deputy Commissioner Steve Gollschewski joined me in handing over the Queensland Police baton to the Queensland Police Service party led by Road Policing Command Inspector Peter Flanders. The Wall to Wall Ride is an opportunity for our officers to commemorate their comrades who made the ultimate sacrifice in the line of duty. Their names and their sacrifice will never be forgotten. The ride has become an important part of commemorations in the lead-up to the National Police Remembrance Day and it also promotes safe and responsible motorcycle riding.

The commissioner joined the official QPS group as a rider on the final leg of the journey from Sydney to Canberra. It was an honour to greet them as they arrived in Canberra on Saturday and to represent the Palaszczuk government at this moving national remembrance ceremony. I know that all members of this House today will join me in encouraging as many Queenslanders as possible to turn out to National Police Remembrance Day ceremonies across the state on 29 September. From Coolangatta to the cape, let us all send a strong message to our Police Service that we deeply appreciate the personal sacrifice that they make each and every day to keep us safe. With honour they served.

Racing Queensland

 **Hon. WS BYRNE** (Rockhampton—ALP) (Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries and Minister for Sport and Racing) (2.36 pm): Yesterday I tabled in the parliament the 2014-15 Racing Queensland annual report. The Auditor-General confirmed that Racing Queensland recorded a consolidated operating loss of \$12.7 million for the 2014-15 financial year and on a 'business as usual setting' is heading for a budgeted loss of \$28 million for the 2015-16 financial year.

Mr Nicholls: \$23 million profit—\$23 million in the bank. \$23 million profit, unqualified accounts.

Mr BYRNE: The government has been open and transparent about these losses and we know that they are both unsustainable and damaging to the industry. It is interesting that the former treasurer of this state, who has his figures all over this, is very vocal at this point. Whilst the annual report does show a result of a positive comprehensive income of \$23 million, this is due to the increase in the value of Racing Queensland assets. If the opposition had bothered to read the report they would see that it says the increase is \$36.2 million. That is where it comes from. These assets include properties at Sunshine Coast Racing, Rockhampton Racing, the facilities at Deagon and Albion Park, and land at Logan and Bowen. It is important to note that if the value of my house had gone up to say a million dollars—and it has not—it would not affect the way in which my daily budget for running my house operates. It is the same situation for Racing Queensland.

This situation has developed entirely under the LNP's watch, under the previous treasurer's watch. The report highlights that the expenses at Racing Queensland increased by over \$30 million. Racing Queensland itself has recorded a loss of \$11.2 million in its own operations. As the report notes, this is primarily a result of the outage at Eagle Farm—their efforts involved there—and a change in the nature of the wagering market. The Auditor-General notes in the 'Emphasis of Matter'—

... indicates that the statutory body incurred a net loss of \$12.7 million during the year ending 30 June 2015. The loss, and forecast increased losses in 2015-16, indicates the existence of a material uncertainty that may cast significant doubt about the statutory body's ability to continue as a going concern and therefore the statutory body may be unable to realise its assets and discharge its liabilities in the normal course of business.

How more damning can the situation be? Racing Queensland cash reserves have been depleted by \$9.9 million since the last annual report. The current cash reserves reported in the audit are just a snapshot, not a clear picture of the health of Racing Queensland.

Additionally, liabilities at Racing Queensland have increased by over \$3 million. Racing Queensland currently owes \$25 million payable to creditors. It is the operating loss of \$12.7 million that is the great concern, particularly the \$11.18 million lost solely within Racing Queensland's business group. I fully acknowledge these concerns. I want to emphasise that the government remains absolutely committed to making Racing Queensland sustainable in the future.

The industry restructure currently underway will provide a solid foundation for repositioning Racing Queensland and is specifically focused on the identification and implementation of strategies to return Racing Queensland to an operational surplus by 1 June 2016. It should be noted that I have the full expectation that any interim funding provided by the state to Racing Queensland to maintain its operations until the industry restructure is complete will be repaid once a position of financial viability has been achieved by Racing Queensland.

The interjections that I have received here during this statement indicate that, not only was the LNP an economic bunch of illiterates in the last course of government, but they now prove themselves to be financially illiterate as well.

Renewable Energy Reverse Auction

 **Hon. MC BAILEY** (Yeerongpilly—ALP) (Minister for Main Roads, Road Safety and Ports and Minister for Energy and Water Supply) (2.41 pm): Mr Speaker, I am pleased to advise the House of the next steps the Palaszczuk government is taking towards making our 'Sunshine State' the solar state. During the election campaign we committed to a renewable energy reverse auction. I am delighted to advise the House that we will exceed our election commitment of 40 megawatts by 50 per cent. The auction will now be for solar projects only, and we will be collaborating with the Australian Renewable Energy Agency, Arena, to deliver the initiative.

This announcement of a solar-only focus will promote further investment into renewable energy developments, create new jobs of the future and send a welcome signal of support from the government to the renewable energy sector. By supporting up to 60 megawatts of extra renewable energy capacity, we are driving the establishment of large scale solar generation in this state, which is something that is long overdue. While Queensland leads the world in solar PV adoption rates on domestic and business rooftops—higher than Germany, California or Hawaii—our large scale solar industry is yet to be established to a significant degree.

Developing and expanding Queensland's renewable energy industry is a central component of the Palaszczuk government's clean energy policy agenda. Increasing the uptake of renewable energy in Queensland will not only respond to climate change and protect our environment but also create new jobs and, importantly, diversify our economy. Queensland has some of the best solar resources in the world and is ideally placed to benefit as solar generation becomes an increasingly important part of our electricity mix. By growing this industry we can develop jobs now and jobs for the future.

Unfortunately, last night we saw the deputy chair of the relevant parliamentary committee, the member for Southport, declare himself a renewable energy jobs sceptic. He also derided some of the latest technological advancements in the sector. You will have to forgive me, but I will take the opinion of Elon Musk over the Queensland LNP any day. In fact, the member for Southport seems to be unaware that lithium ion is driving battery technology, not lead. Under the previous LNP government we saw the renewable energy sector workforce lose around 1,300 jobs over three years. Now they not only want to slash renewable jobs in the sector retrospectively, but they want to do it in the future as well—a 20th century agenda.

I can also advise the House that the Queensland Productivity Commission has also received the terms of reference to commence a public review into a fair price for the cost of solar energy sold back into the electricity grid by homes and small businesses. We want a fair price for customers, regardless of whether a system is installed or is planned to be installed. The review's findings will further support the take-up of solar as we push towards one million rooftops—or 3,000 megawatts—of solar PV capacity by 2020. This process will run concurrently with the recent announcement of Ergon Energy's 150 megawatt large scale renewable energy expression of interest and will help drive an unprecedented amount of renewable energy investment and jobs in Queensland.

MOTION

Referral to the Health and Ambulance Services Committee

 **Hon. SJ HINCHLIFFE** (Sandgate—ALP) (Leader of the House) (2.45 pm), by leave, without notice: I move—

1. That the Health and Ambulance Services Committee inquire into and report to the Legislative Assembly by 12 May 2016 on:
 - a) the potential role, scope and strategic directions of a Queensland Health Promotion Commission,
 - b) the effectiveness of collaborative, whole-of-government and systems approaches for improving and sustaining health and wellbeing including:
 - i. models used in other jurisdictions (including specific agencies or whole-of-government policy frameworks); and
 - ii. population based strategies other than personal interventions delivered by telephone or ICT.
2. That, in undertaking the inquiry, the committee should consider:
 - a) approaches to addressing the social determinants of health;
 - b) population groups disproportionately affected by chronic disease;
 - c) economic and social benefits of strategies to improve health and wellbeing;
 - d) emerging approaches and strategies that show significant potential;
 - e) ways of partnering across government and with industry and community including collaborative funding, evaluation and research; and
 - f) ways of reducing fragmentation in health promotion efforts and increasing shared responsibility across sectors.

COMMITTEE OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Report

 **Hon. SJ HINCHLIFFE** (Sandgate—ALP) (Leader of the House) (2.46 pm): Mr Speaker, I lay upon the table of the House report No. 14 of the Committee of the Legislative Assembly on the 2015 budget estimates process.

Tabled paper: Committee of the Legislative Assembly: Report No. 14—Report on the 2015 Budget Estimates process [\[1085\]](#).

On behalf of the Committee of the Legislative Assembly I wish to convey our thanks to all Parliamentary Service staff involved in delivering a seamless hearing process for 2015. I commend the report to the House.

NOTICES OF MOTION

Disallowance of Statutory Instrument

 **Mrs FRECKLINGTON** (Nanango—LNP) (2.47 pm): I give notice that I will move—

That the Fisheries Act 1994, Rural and Regional Adjustment Act 1994 and Fisheries and Other Regulation Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2015 tabled in the House on 15 September 2015 be disallowed.

Ethics Committee

 **Mr SPRINGBORG** (Southern Downs—LNP) (Leader of the Opposition) (2.47 pm): I give notice that I will move—

- (1) That the House instruct the Ethics Committee to report by 13 October on the matter of privilege referred by the PCCC on 18 August 2015 relating to the alleged failure of a member to follow an order of the previous PCCC and alleged unauthorised disclosure of the committee's proceedings.
- (2) That at the time of its report the Ethics Committee table in the House the statement in relation to the destruction of documents referred to in the letter from the Acting Chair of the PCCC to the Speaker dated 17 August 2015, tabled in the House on 18 August 2015.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Labor Party, Unions

 **Mr SPRINGBORG** (Southern Downs—LNP) (Leader of the Opposition) (2.48 pm): It has been very obvious since the election of this Labor government just over seven months ago that this state has ground to a halt as a consequence of the strangle grip that each and every day the union movement and union bosses have over this government. It is very obvious that the only priority legislation that we

have seen from this government has been in relation to turning back the clock prior to 31 January this year to pro-union boss legislation. That has been to the detriment of jobs and infrastructure in Queensland.

The Deputy Premier is going to take 12 months to develop a plan to have a plan for infrastructure in Queensland. It is about time that we have a government which is interested in governing for all Queensland. This morning we heard the Premier say that she ran a government for all Queenslanders, particularly those Queenslanders who are trade union bosses, like our friend Mr Dave Hanna. Nothing makes a Labor Party Premier—

Mr PITT: I rise to a point of order, Mr Speaker. Is he going to table the prop?

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order.

Mr SPRINGBORG: I would be happy to do so. I actually have a copy for him.

Tabled paper. Photograph, undated, of the Premier, Hon Anastacia Palaszczuk, and another person [1086].

I minted it earlier. The only thing that makes a Labor Party Premier happier than standing up with a union boss is having a selfie with a union boss. What is unusual about this union boss—

Honourable members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Leader of the Opposition, one moment please.

Ms Palaszczuk interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order, Premier.

Mr Bleijie interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order, member for Kawana. Honourable members, it is not appropriate to use that sort of material. There is no information, in my view, apart from photos of two people. There is no graph. I would prefer that members not persist in using those support items. That applies to both sides of the House.

Mr SPRINGBORG: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I was just taking the lead from the Deputy Premier yesterday. It may have passed without some degree of notice—but maybe not—that this week we have the royal commission into trade union corruption in Queensland. Hasn't it been very instructive? That gentleman there, whom the Premier was so happy to have a selfie taken with, is a person who is under a very serious cloud. A trade union boss—a former vice-president of the Labor Party; someone who quite clearly has been involved, based on the evidence, in extortionate activity—has been pulling the strings of the Labor Party in Queensland. It is this sort of activity which we are seeing from the trade union movement right across Queensland and right across Australia which is dragging down business and drawing a serious pall over the conduct and accountability of this government. It is about time that this Premier and this government stand up and disassociate themselves—

(Time expired)

Infrastructure Projects



Hon. JA TRAD (South Brisbane—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Minister for Transport, Minister for Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning and Minister for Trade) (2.52 pm): I am very happy to be following the Leader of the Opposition. One thing you know when coming into parliament and thinking about what the opposition are likely to do is that they are incredibly predictable.

Ms Jones: Except for yesterday.

Ms TRAD: I will take that interjection from the education minister: except for yesterday. Nobody knew what they were going on about yesterday. Let me be clear: suggestions of an infrastructure freeze, suggestions of a slow economic situation in Queensland, are rubbish. It is just more trash talk from those opposite about our economy and our state. Let me make it very clear that the first Palaszczuk Labor government's budget delivered a very big spend in terms of infrastructure projects across this state—more than \$400 million on top of what those opposite spent in the last financial year. It is a total of \$10.1 million in this financial year alone. That is 27½ thousand jobs right across the state.

Let me outline for the benefit of the House that those projects included in this budget were nowhere to be seen in the budget from the previous government. There are two new schools in Townsville. There is a new special school in Cairns. There is the redevelopment of the Yeppoon foreshore. There is the Rockhampton riverfront renewal project. There is the western roads package, which has been embraced by bush councils in Queensland. There is funding for the Townsville stadium, funding for a new state netball centre in Brisbane and funding for Commonwealth Games road upgrades.

Let me make it clear that any suggestion of a freeze on infrastructure projects in Queensland lays fairly and squarely at the feet of those opposite, because for three years they had no plan and they delivered no pipeline.

Mr Nicholls interjected.

Ms TRAD: I take on board the interjection from the member for Clayfield, because I would like to refer to his report to the Queensland parliament in 2013 after the QTC investor roadshow. Key findings from his tour were, 'Global infrastructure funds were looking to invest directly in Queensland infrastructure and were keen to hear about the pipeline of projects.' There was no pipeline because those opposite turned their back on investment and on infrastructure. They are not only financial illiterates but also infrastructure illiterates.

Queensland Economy, Infrastructure Projects

 **Mr LANGBROEK** (Surfers Paradise—LNP) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (2.55 pm): No matter how much the Deputy Premier wants to say that there is no infrastructure freeze, ask the people at the Civil Contractors Federation. Ask the people in business whether they are very confident about the future. No matter how much the Premier, Treasurer and Deputy Premier might like to ignore it, business confidence has slumped under this do-nothing government and Queensland's economy is suffering because of it. Members of the Premier's own Business Advisory Council have pleaded with her to act, as the Queensland economy stalls under her leadership. Business leaders want to see the Premier step up and make decisions, not just wind back the clock.

Unfortunately, the Premier, Treasurer and Deputy Premier are more focused on day-to-day politics than outlining their economic vision. Not only that; they refuse to see the writing on the wall. Only yesterday the Treasurer stood in this place talking about the latest NAB business confidence survey. Not once did he mention that business confidence fell by six points last month. Only Western Australia fared worse than Queensland.

That is not the only report highlighting the lack of confidence in the direction this government is taking Queensland. The census survey of small and medium sized businesses shows that net confidence in Queensland is the lowest in the nation. Confidence in government policies has plummeted since the election. Both the Premier and the small business minister have trumpeted the CCIQ pulse survey for the June quarter, which showed business confidence in Queensland slightly improving. They ignore the fact that confidence had rebounded off record lows. They ignore the fact that we are well into negative territory. They ignore the fact the survey shows for every person who is confident in the direction of the Queensland economy there are two who think we are going backwards. How can businesses have confidence in this government when we have a Treasurer who is more interested in performing magic coin tricks in parliament than building the economy? How can businesses have confidence in a Treasurer who comes into the place and talks about Queensland being in a recession without even realising the recklessness of this statement?

Two weeks ago the Australian Bureau of Statistics released state final demand figures for the June quarter. Those figures showed Queensland's domestic economic performance was the weakest of all Australian states. When the Premier was asked about the figures she could not acknowledge the problem. She could not even get the numbers right. She tried to fire back at the LNP using old figures, not even realising these figures get revised by the ABS. That is the problem with this government. They are too focused on reviews, on winding back the clock and on playing politics than doing the hard work to take this state forward.

Rather than talking down the economy, I am just repeating what people are saying to me out in the community. I am simply pointing out what the Premier's own advisers are telling her: get on with it. Stop delaying projects and start delivering. Stop the infrastructure freeze. Stop focusing on day-to-day politics and start coming up with a plan for Queensland's future and the real economy.

Queensland Economy, Market Led Proposals

 **Hon. CW PITT** (Mulgrave—ALP) (Treasurer, Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships) (2.58 pm): The shadow Treasurer had so little to say that he left 30 seconds on the clock. Following on from the Queensland Treasury Corporation roadshow, where I received positive interest from international investors about investment

opportunities here in Queensland, I am pleased to inform the House after the very sad diatribe we just heard that a very encouraging level of interest has been shown in the private sector in Queensland about our market led proposals policy.

Following on from the release of the new market led proposals policy and guidelines as part of the 2015-16 budget, there has been real interest from the private sector in exploring opportunities to partner with the Palaszczuk government on innovative new projects. Since coming to government we have substantially overhauled the process of considering such proposals and introduced a new project assessment framework. A number of project proponents that have been working up ideas have embraced it as a way of getting clear government direction on the level of interest to proceed. This enables the private sector to submit projects for potential partnership with the state. We want to get the private sector to play a bigger role in promoting growth and investment opportunities and propose solutions to economic and social infrastructure challenges.

The market led proposals framework recognises that, while encouraging competition in selection processes and procurement is always preferable, there are situations where unique proposals can bring beneficial outcomes. Proponents must be able to say how their proposal delivers a government priority outcome in a way that clearly delivers value to the government and cannot be replicated by a competitor. We have streamlined the assessment process to make it easier to engage with government. We have a centralised access point through our market led proposals portal. We want this initiative to make it easier for proponents to submit a proposal, get it through assessment and get it underway and that hopefully will satisfy the member for Surfers Paradise, especially complex proposals with interest from multiple government departments.

I encourage businesses with project ideas to come to Treasury for a confidential presubmission meeting to discuss ways of getting direct feedback on their proposal so that, when they do submit it, it ticks as many boxes as possible from the start. Since we announced this in the budget just two months ago we have had more than a dozen proposals come through the presubmission phase. While the submissions are preliminary and commercial in confidence at this stage, I am very pleased to advise the House that we have not just received infrastructure proposals; we have also received proposals from the tourism and social services sectors as well. So if anyone has projects that may fit—and that is for anyone in Queensland who has those proposals—we want them to raise them through our straightforward presubmission process.

I look forward to leveraging more investment in Queensland at the Premier's Far North Queensland Economic Summit in Cairns in a bid to attract greater investment from our Asian trading partners. This economic summit will bring together business, industry and potential investors in an effort to facilitate new partnerships, particularly in North Queensland. We continue to hear from the shadow Treasurer, who does not understand some of the figures he is talking about. He is still talking about surveys which are out of date and included some of his own time in government. He is also including things that do not include the national accounts.

Racing Industry

 **Mrs STUCKEY** (Currumbin—LNP) (3.01 pm): The Queensland racing industry deserves better than an incompetent minister and a Labor government that have relentlessly talked down Queensland's racing industry, and the minister did it in here again just a few minutes ago. If we look back through the Minister for Sport and Racing's statements in this House, we would be very hard pressed to find a single word of praise amongst the multitude of negative comments. For several months now our racing industry has been under siege from a government intent on tearing it apart, scaremongering and trashing the reputations of many within it. For several months now I have been asking the minister to furnish this House with some proof of his accusations and to table the documents on which he has based his comments of the purported cost blowouts in Racing Queensland's budget, but he was unwilling to share these documents time and again, just as he has been unwilling to meet with stakeholders.

Yesterday, though, with the tabling by the Clerk in this parliament of the annual report for Queensland All Codes Racing Industry Board 2014-15, all that gloom and doom along with the fear and smear campaign has now been exposed for what it was—a beat-up. The financial accounts released yesterday for Racing Queensland show total revenue for the organisation was up \$23 million, there is

\$3 million cash in the bank and there is no debt, and the Auditor-General signed this off as an unqualified report. When asked about this on the Steve Austin program this morning, the minister answered as followed—

Austin: \$23 million profit. Do you agree with that?

Byrne: I agree.

Austin: Can I get you to confirm Racing Queensland shows no debt?

Byrne: At this point, yes.

Austin: Can you confirm it has \$3 million in cash in the bank?

Byrne: That is true too.

What we have seen here is that the release of these supposed damning budget blowouts are so much more about Labor's agenda to return to the bad old days under a Bentley type regime than about responsible financial management. Labor still has no plan. The LNP on the other hand had a very strong strategy for growth which has been outlined very clearly. Labor has spent the bulk of this year destroying the confidence and reputations of people in the racing fraternity. I now challenge the minister to apologise to the racing fraternity of Queensland for the damage that he has been doing—not once, not twice but on numerous occasions. Quite frankly, this minister has lost the confidence of an industry that brings in \$850 million to this state every year and he has installed so much fear in people's jobs and their futures, and that is disgraceful.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Mr SPEAKER: Before commencing question time, I am pleased to inform members that students from Emmaus College in the electorate of Rockhampton are currently in the gallery observing our proceedings. Question time will conclude at five minutes past four.

Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services

 **Mr SPRINGBORG** (3.05 pm): My question without notice is to the Minister for Police. As the minister oversees a portfolio responsible for current investigations into alleged criminal activities by trade unions, including the CFMEU, I ask: is it appropriate the minister retain her membership of this organisation while investigations are underway?

Mrs MILLER: For the benefit of the Leader of the Opposition, I do not and will not ever—ever—interfere in the operations of the Queensland Police Service in any shape, manner or form.

Mr SPRINGBORG: I rise to a point of order. My question was not in relation to the answer that the minister gave; my question was very specifically about whether it was appropriate that the minister retain her membership of a union which is currently under investigation while those investigations are underway.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: I rise to a point of order. On hearing the Leader of the Opposition's clarification about his question, it strikes me that he is therefore seeking an opinion from the minister and the question is out of order.

Mr SPEAKER: Thank you, Leader of the House. My interpretation is that the minister has answered the question. I call the Leader of the Opposition to ask his second question.

Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services

Mr SPRINGBORG: My second question without notice is also to the Minister for Police, and I ask: given that the Premier said that it was an error of judgement for the minister to contact a witness in relation to a police investigation into the member for Pumicestone, can the minister confirm that she has not again made an error of judgement by contacting officials of the CFMEU since it has been revealed the organisation is under police investigation?

Mrs MILLER: The only time that I have been in touch with members of the mining division of the CFMEU was in relation to an official function which was the anniversary of the Mining and Energy Division wherein I sought the advice of the Clerk of the Parliament as well as the Integrity Commissioner.

Turnbull Coalition Government

Ms GRACE: My question is to the Premier. Can the Premier update the House on any discussions she has had with the new Prime Minister?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I thank the member for Brisbane Central very much for the question. In fact, I am delighted to report to the House that indeed this morning I was able to make direct contact with the new Prime Minister, Malcolm Turnbull, and it was a refreshing conversation. It was a constructive conversation and I had the opportunity to raise a number of issues with the new Prime Minister on behalf of the Queensland people.

The first issue I raised very clearly was the need for more infrastructure in this state. I want to see our economy continue to grow—grow the economy to create the jobs with the infrastructure we need for now and for the future. Wouldn't it be refreshing if those opposite would join with us in a spirit of bipartisanship, as we have seen over the last week, to get more infrastructure for our state? We could start with the Gold Coast Light Rail. There are a number of members on the opposition benches who represent the Gold Coast who could now be making contact with the new Prime Minister, Malcolm Turnbull, and asking him to support us in the need for the Gold Coast Light Rail.

In fact, Mr Ciobo was on the radio just yesterday. It seems that he has changed his tune since there has been a new Prime Minister down in Canberra. He said—

It is my judgement that there is room for a discussion around that. I know when I have spoken with Malcolm previously both in terms of when he was in the Gold Coast most recently but also when he and I discussed urban transport in Canberra his view on these matters is different to Tony Abbott's. I therefore am of the view that it means that we have got perhaps more opportunity to look at the merits of funding stage 2.

Isn't that refreshing! If Steve Ciobo can say that, why can't the Leader of the Opposition? Why can't the member for Mermaid Beach? Why can't the member for Surfers Paradise? Why can't the member for Gaven, or why can't the member for Indooroopilly? Why can't those opposite join with us in creating jobs right throughout Queensland?

Opposition members interjected.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I do not know what they have against Malcolm Turnbull.

Opposition members interjected.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Mr Speaker, honestly! The other issue that I raised with the Prime Minister, and one which I believe is crucial in the western parts of Queensland, is the drought. Does the member for Nanango want to laugh about the drought? Seriously, here I am discussing issues that are relevant to Queenslanders across the state and those opposite want to laugh and joke about it. I also raised the trial for the National Disability Insurance Scheme and the need for a national summit on domestic and family violence.

Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services

Mr LANGBROEK: My question is to the Premier. Has the Premier discussed the police minister's future and performance with any union bosses?

Ms PALASZCZUK: No.

Townsville Stadium

Mr STEWART: My question is to the Premier. Can the Premier update the House on the government's support for a new stadium development in Townsville, the home of the North Queensland Cowboys?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I thank the member for Townsville for the question. Of course, over the weekend we saw the mighty clash between the Broncos and the Cowboys. I know that many Queenslanders would have been divided on the night, but was it not wonderful to see two Queensland teams in the finals! We know that, come this Saturday, the Cowboys are playing up in Townsville. Would it not be lovely to have a brand-new stadium there for the Cowboys?

Once again, I raised this issue with Malcolm Turnbull—another key infrastructure project. Our money is on the table—\$100 million as announced by the Treasurer during our most recent budget. Now, we need some matching funds, which would be helpful, for an even bigger stadium in Townsville. This is vital for North Queensland. It is vital for Townsville—

Mr Costigan: Why didn't you do it all those years you were in government?

Ms PALASZCZUK: They seem to forget that they were in government for three years and we did not see that. As the Minister for Tourism mentioned, we have DestinationQ coming up next month up in Townsville where, I am advised, over 280 tourism operators will be in attendance. Also during that period we will be having a North Queensland economic forum where I will be inviting mayors from around the region to come to Townsville to discuss the priorities for the northern region. The minister assisting me for North Queensland will be present as will the Deputy Premier and also the Treasurer.

This is a government for all of Queensland. We are not going to leave Townsville left behind. We are going to make sure that they have the resources that they need, we are going to make sure that we give them the support that they need and we are going to make sure that they get the stadium that they deserve up there in Townsville.

Once again, we would like to see some bipartisan support from those opposite in supporting us to deliver this vital infrastructure for the north of the region. There are a lot of interesting things happening in Townsville. We look forward to the match on Saturday and let us hope that the Cowboys do very well. On behalf of the Queensland parliament, we wish them all the very best.

Mr SPEAKER: Order, members! Before calling the member for Kawana, can I inform the member for Mermaid Beach that you are not on the speaking list, but if you would like to get on the speaking list to put some questions to the minister then I would invite you to take it up with your side.

Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services

Mr BLEIJIE: My question is to the Minister for Police. The minister confirmed today that she has had contact with union officials and bosses under police investigation at what I suspect was a recently held grand gala union dinner. At that gala dinner, my question—

Mr HINCHLIFFE: Mr Speaker—

Mr SPEAKER: One moment, member for Kawana. Leader of the House, what is your point of order?

Mr HINCHLIFFE: The honourable member's preamble to his question—I appreciate that he has not got to his question yet—

Mr SPEAKER: What is your point of order, Leader of the House?

Mr HINCHLIFFE: The preamble to the member's question included—

Mr Bleijie: Your point of order is longer than my preamble.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: I can make it take a long time if he wants. Have you not learned that—

Honourable members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order, members! What is your point of order?

Mr HINCHLIFFE: The point of order is that the honourable member's preamble included a statement that he provided no evidence for. He made a suggestion about what had been said in an answer already—

Mr SPEAKER: Thank you, Leader of the House.

Mr HINCHLIFFE:—which was not true.

Mr SPEAKER: Thank you. Member for Kawana, will you please put your question?

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank you, Mr Speaker. When the minister had contact with these union officials, did the minister discuss the current performance of the minister or her future as a minister?

Mrs MILLER: No.

Townsville City Waterfront Priority Development Area

Mr HARPER: My question is to the Deputy Premier. Would the Deputy Premier please update the House on progress regarding the Townsville City Waterfront Priority Development?

Ms TRAD: I thank the member for Thuringowa for the question. I know that he, along with the member for Townsville and the member for Mundingburra, is passionate about the Townsville region. They are wanting to see it grow and thrive, particularly through some of the key election policies that the Palaszczuk Labor government made at the last election, like the \$100 million for the Townsville stadium.

Another very exciting project that this government is partnering with the Townsville City Council on is the waterfront PDA. The waterfront PDA is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for a city-shaping exercise for one of the most important regional centres in Queensland and that is Townsville.

Mr Seeney interjected.

Ms TRAD: I note that the former Deputy Premier and member for Callide is getting somewhat excited about this. Can I say that this was something that the council very much desired would be progressed under the former government and, much like an infrastructure pipeline, it stalled. Nothing happened. So I am very pleased to report that we are getting on with the job.

Mr Seeney: You opposed the concept of PDAs. You voted against the legislation. There would not be PDAs if it were up to you.

Ms TRAD: I am very happy to go into the Urban Land Development Authority and what it was able to achieve in Queensland before EDQ ever came along and before there were ever PDAs, but I will not do that. I will not bore members unceasingly—

Honourable members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Pause the clock. One moment, please. I warn all members to cease interjecting. Otherwise, I will refer to the standing orders and some members might be taking a short holiday. I call the—

Mr Hinchliffe interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: I do not need your assistance, Leader of the House.

Ms TRAD: The PDA is a joint project between Economic Development Queensland, Townsville City Council and the Port of Townsville. It will transform 97 hectares of prime land on Ross Creek into a world-class precinct of residential, commercial and community spaces. Can I advise the House that the Townsville community has absolutely embraced it. Recently I was up there and announced the planning scheme with the Mayor of Townsville, Jenny Hill. Can I say that the response from the local community has been overwhelming. More than 270 submissions were received and overwhelmingly the community supports the redevelopment of this prime area of the city. There is anticipated to be about 30,000 additional residents move to Townsville over the next couple of decades. This sort of development means that they will have somewhere to live, they will have places to work, they will have places to play.

Mr Seeney: When did the consultation process start? When did the development planning process start?

Ms TRAD: Perhaps if the member for Callide had played a little bit more last term he would be a happier man and perhaps he would have been able to control the former premier.

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Callide, I think you will have an opportunity to put that question to the minister.

Disclosure of Political Donations

Mr WALKER: My question is to the Attorney-General. Attorney, I refer to the CEPU Plumbing Division disclosure return for the Redcliffe by-election in which it is disclosed that candidate D'Ath received the sum of \$10,000 as a political donation. Will the Attorney explain why this \$10,000 donation appears not to be disclosed in her return for the Redcliffe by-election?

Mr HINCHLIFFE: I rise to a point of order. I draw your attention to the standing orders and the nature of questions that can be directed to ministers. They are directed to ministers about their ministerial responsibilities. While I listened very carefully to the shadow Attorney-General's question, because it does relate to legislation under the Attorney-General's jurisdiction, what the question came to was a question of a return of disclosure on behalf of the Australian Labor Party so I would ask that you draw that to the member's attention and rule the question out of order.

Mr WALKER: This is clearly a matter which is within the Attorney-General's portfolio area and should not be ruled out of order on the grounds set out by the Leader of the House.

Mr SPEAKER: One moment, members. I will take advice. Member for Mansfield, would you please repeat your question?

Mr WALKER: I refer to the CEPU Plumbing Division disclosure return for the Redcliffe be-election in which it is disclosed that candidate D'Ath received the sum of \$10,000 as a political donation. Will the Attorney explain why this \$10,000 donation appears not to be disclosed in her return for the Redcliffe by-election?

Mr SPEAKER: Unfortunately, it does not appear to me to have a sufficient nexus with the minister's responsibilities.

Mr CRIPPS: I rise to a point of order. I seek your ruling. Can you advise the House whether or not it is within the responsibilities of the Attorney-General to ensure that the Electoral Act is complied with?

Mr SPEAKER: I would urge members to draft your questions so that they comply with the standing orders. I would invite you in the future, if you wish to, to consult with the Clerk or his staff in relation to the drafting of your questions. I rule the question out of order.

Apprentices and Trainees

Mr POWER: My question is to the Treasurer. With students soon to graduate from Park Ridge High School, St Francis, Parklands, Browns Plains State High School and the wonderful Flagstone State Community College and many of them interested in getting into trades and traineeships, will the Treasurer outline how the Palaszczuk government's payroll tax rebate for apprentices and trainees is being received in the wider community throughout Queensland?

Mr PITT: I thank the member for Logan for his question. I know he takes a very keen interest in what is happening in his local area, particularly to young people leaving school and wanting to get into apprenticeships and traineeships. I advise that Queensland businesses have the right policy settings to grow and create jobs, enjoying the benefits already of the highest payroll tax exemption threshold of any mainland state and, of course, the lowest payroll tax rate of any jurisdiction. At 4.75 per cent our payroll tax rate is more competitive than New South Wales at 5.45 per cent or Western Australia at 5.5 per cent. Interestingly, it is the Labor states that have rates below five per cent—Queensland, Victoria and South Australia—while it is the Liberal governments that oversee higher payroll tax rates—the highest in the country.

This parliament has already passed our payroll tax rebate. Since 1 July we have introduced a 25 per cent rebate on the payroll tax of the wages of each apprentice and trainee employed. This rebate is in addition to the apprentice and trainee wages that are exempt from payroll tax already and is offset against the tax payable on the wages of other employees. Opposition members make noise about payroll tax thresholds and have some sort of revisionist view of their time in government. To recap, straight after its first budget the former government broke its promise to increase the payroll tax threshold each and every year. It broke its own 2012 election promise just in time to promise it again at the 2015 state election. This is in stark contrast to our approach. We costed the increase to the threshold at \$255 million and clearly identified it was something that was not fiscally achievable given the state of the budget left by those opposite. Our \$45 million commitment is fully costed and is about making sure that we encourage more apprentices and trainees into our workforce.

Our threshold is the most competitive of all mainland states. It is some \$350,000 more generous than New South Wales and some \$300,000 more generous than that of Western Australia. In the context of existing competitiveness, our payroll tax regime is going to be remaining at that threshold of \$1.1 million for the foreseeable future. We have estimated that since we have had this payroll tax rebate in effect nearly 1,400 businesses have claimed more than \$1.3 million in payroll tax rebates during the first two months. Each of the nearly 1,400 businesses that I am talking about that has so far claimed this rebate are saving on average around \$400 a month on their wages bill. This is an incentive for Queensland businesses to hire more young staff just like those referred to by the member for Logan and will continue to develop our skilled workforce. It is also a chance to show that if fully subscribed it is around \$45 million that may be reinvested back into businesses here in Queensland—a great outcome. I thank the member for the question.

Disclosure of Political Donations

Mr EMERSON: My question is to the Attorney-General. I refer to the Attorney-General's Redcliffe by-election declaration in which she declared she received \$29,030 as a salary package from the AWU. Given the AWU has not declared this in its own return, can the Attorney advise what investigations are underway?

Mrs D'ATH: I thank the member for his question. I am happy to go away and have a look at whether that statement is actually accurate or not. But, yes, that was declared because I was employed at the time and it was appropriate to declare that. The good thing about the fact that this question has been asked by the member is that he is able to make that statement because I did make a declaration, unlike those on the other side where there is \$100,000 worth of donations that are not disclosed. Who gave you \$100,000?

Opposition members interjected.

Mrs D'ATH: The fact is that on this side of the House we actually make our declarations. I made my declaration as a candidate because I was employed at the time and so I recorded that I had an income at the time and that was noted in my disclosure. In relation to any disclosures the AWU has made, I will go away and have a look at that. I am happy to do so.

Honourable members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Members! I am listening to the Attorney-General's answer.

Mrs D'ATH: As I have stated, I am happy to go away and have a look whether, in fact, that disclosure has been made by the AWU or not. Just as the ECQ said in estimates, if there are not disclosures they will investigate, just as the ECQ said in estimates that it will be investigating the LNP. Why are they investigating the LNP? That is because there is \$100,000 worth of donations that have not been declared. Why is that? That is because the LNP do not want to disclose. They changed the thresholds so they could take these sorts of donations and no-one would ever know about them. It was that party that increased the thresholds under the legislation so we would not know who is donating to political parties. We on this side of the House made it very clear that, despite the changes made by the LNP, we would keep disclosing our donations. That is what we said and we have continued to do so. I had made my disclosure in the Redcliffe by-election.

Honourable members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Thank you, members. Pause the clock for a moment, please. I am having difficulty hearing the Attorney-General over the interjections. I call the Attorney-General, if she wants to continue.

Mrs D'ATH: In relation to the Redcliffe by-election, I made my disclosures. I am more than happy to go back and look at what disclosures occurred for the LNP's candidate and how much of those have been identified in the reports.

Queensland Health

Miss BOYD: My question is to the Minister for Health and Ambulance Services. Will the minister please update the House on actions taken to ensure that public money is expended efficiently and effectively across Queensland Health?

Mr DICK: I thank the honourable member for her question. One of the most significant responsibilities of a minister of state is to ensure that public moneys are used effectively and appropriately in departments. That is why at the recent estimates committee hearing I put on the record my very deep concern about the use of contractors in the Department of Health under the previous administration. What did I find when I came to office as the Minister for Health? In the last financial year, the Department of Health spent \$126.1 million on contractors under the stewardship of the former minister and now opposition leader. That was an increase of almost 26 per cent over the financial year 2013-14 to 2014-15. It went from \$100 million to \$126 million. It is no wonder—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Pause the clock. Leader of the Opposition, I think the minister is trying to answer the question. Member for Caloundra, I think the minister is trying to answer the question.

Mr DICK: What did I find? The department advised of an increased use of contractors without using proper merit selection processes, an increased use of contractors without consideration of the significant daily rate fees and an increased use of contractors that sometimes duplicated existing Public Service expertise. What happened in the office of the opposition leader's hand-picked director-general? In the director-general's office the cost for contractors went from \$700,000 to \$6.6 million, which is an increase of almost 900 per cent. He did that. He let all of that happen while he was the Minister for Health. I directed the department to do an immediate review. What have we done immediately? We have found savings of \$541,000 a fortnight by ensuring that unnecessary contractors are no longer used. That is \$541,000 that they—

Mr Springborg: We found that in a day after we took over.

Mr DICK: I take the interjection. He had plenty of money for contractors, but he did not have enough money for nurses. He was happy to sack 1,800 nurses and midwives.

Mr Springborg: You couldn't pay them.

Mr DICK: You could not pay them either, because you were paying contractors.

In the second phase, we are looking at 340 contractors to see whether they should continue in the department. This is a serious matter, which is why this morning I wrote to the Queensland Auditor-General to ask him to undertake an independent audit of the recent use of contractors in Queensland Health. It is a very significant matter to consider why there was a significant explosion—a 900 per cent increase—in the use of contractors in the office of the director-general alone. This is a very important matter. We have to use contractors on occasions where necessary, but only where necessary and appropriate. I will rely on the Auditor-General's expertise and on his recommendations, because they will be of great benefit to the department and the people of Queensland. I want to ensure that our arrangements for contractors are transparent and subject to appropriate governance, which never happened under the stewardship of the previous minister.

Disclosure of Political Donations

Mr POWELL: My question without notice is to the Attorney-General. I refer to the National Union of Workers' electoral return for the 2015 state election, which declares a \$5,000 gift was given to candidate Curtis Pitt. Given the Treasurer's electoral disclosure return for the same period declares that he received gifts totalling nil dollars, can the Attorney-General advise under Queensland law what investigations are underway?

Mrs D'ATH: I thank the member for his question. This might be the theme for today, so let us just beat it up for members opposite.

Mr Springborg: Oh, really? You are so quick!

Mrs D'ATH: Well, the tactics today are a little bit better than those of yesterday. No-one knew where they were going yesterday. If those on the other side have any allegations whatsoever in relation to disclosures, I ask them to please refer them to the ECQ. I am happy to have them referred to my office and I will contact the ECQ. It just shows that this is all about the politics. I do not believe the LNP has actually raised any of these issues with the Electoral Commission.

Before this little theme keeps going, I put on notice that, in relation to the CEPU donations, members on the other side might want to withdraw so that they are not misleading parliament because, as I understand it, the donations that they are referring to did not say that they had come to me as the member for Redcliffe or to Yvette D'Ath as candidate. It said that they were spent in the Redcliffe by-election as third party donations. Therefore, before members opposite get up and start making allegations that I have—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Members, it is not a shouting match.

Mrs D'ATH: Mr Speaker, it is about being honest in this parliament. Those on the other side are seeking to mislead the parliament through the statements that they are making in relation to donations. They are misleading this parliament in relation to donations by standing up and saying that I have accepted a \$10,000 donation from the CEPU, when their disclosure—which I am sure they have in their hands—states that those are third party disclosures spent on activities in the Redcliffe by-election; that they were not a donation to me. Those on the other side need to start being honest in the statements that they make, because otherwise the next time I get to my feet will be to refer them to the Ethics Committee.

National Broadband Network, Rural Students

Mr PEARCE: My question is to the Minister for Education. How is the federal government's rollout of the national broadband network failing Queensland's rural students?

Ms JONES: I thank the honourable member for the question. I know how passionate he is about ensuring that every child, no matter where they live in this state, gets access to good quality education. It is wonderful to have him back in the parliament advocating on their behalf and it is wonderful to be back with him.

Last week, I had the opportunity to go to Cloncurry to attend the Isolated Children's Parents' Association forum. I note that the honourable member for Everton and the honourable member for Mount Isa were there. The forum was held in the electorate of the honourable member for Mount Isa. Earlier in the year at Barcaldine and Charleville it was really interesting for the Premier and I to meet with parents who are providing in their own homes education for their children, with the support of Education Queensland. We know that in some communities—and I note the member for Mount Isa is nodding his head—having a local state high school is not an option. Therefore, I was very pleased to

announce that the Palaszczuk government has boosted the living away from home allowance for rural families. This additional support that we are providing will give a little more assistance to families that are doing it very tough because of the drought, to ensure that children get access to the best quality education possible.

Probably the No. 1 issue raised with me at the Isolated Children's Parents' Association forum was access to the internet. We know that those parents need to have access to good quality broadband so that they can educate their children. We know that the new Prime Minister oversaw the failed implementation and the winding back of the NBN in this country.

Ms Trad: Nineteenth century technology.

Ms JONES: It was 19th century technology that he wanted to implement. I call on him now as Prime Minister to step up and put education first. We know that he was instructed by Tony Abbott to go in there and pull it all apart, but now as the leader of the country I ask him to look forward. I ask him to listen to the pleas from parents, to actually invest in broadband and to provide the internet service that families are calling for.

On this side of the House we will continue to support them. The Palaszczuk government is already working with internet providers to allow for unmetered education content. The department is also developing solutions.

What we have seen today is an attempt by the opposition to get back on script. They have started bashing up the unions. How did that work for them last election? They cannot walk in here and escape two clear things. We do not know and nor do the people of Queensland know who paid the LNP the \$100,000 which they refuse to declare. Why do they continue to oppose the proposal to increase accountability when it comes to donations? Do not come in here crying crocodile tears. We know that they do not believe in disclosure. Where is the \$100,000?

Country Racing

Mr KNUTH: My question without notice is to the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries and Minister for Sport and Racing. Can the minister confirm that he understands the social and economic importance to country Queensland of non-TAB race meetings which occur once a year? Can he confirm that there will be no reduction in these race meetings or their prize money amounts?

Mr BYRNE: I thank the member for the question and for the considerable interest of the crossbench in country racing in Queensland. The member has highlighted that the one day a year country race meetings are the lifeblood of regional communities. I can advise that Racing Queensland has advised me that there will be no change to the overall programming of these once a year non-TAB country race meetings. They will continue as programmed.

On the question of prize money, Racing Queensland has advised me that it intends on working with local communities, departments and other organisations to find additional sources of revenue for prize money amounts. I recognise that during estimates the member for Mount Isa made some suggestions about potential new sources of prize money revenue. I think that warrants further investigation.

Racing Queensland is currently consulting about regional and country race meetings and how to best allocate funding to these race meetings, including their marketing operations and other means of support, to ensure that they are the best events possible. I can further advise that there will be no overall reduction in prize money for these once a year race days for 2016. That has the support of the Treasurer.

Last weekend I was able to attend the Deagon Community Picnic Race Day with the Leader of the House. It was a marvellous day in the community of Deagon. It was a great example of using racing infrastructure wisely and in a targeted way. The one-off race meeting each year is attended strongly by the community and therefore is an investment into the community. Some 9,000 people attended Deagon on Sunday, as I understand it. I thank the Leader of the House as well as the new local councillor for the Deagon ward, Mr Jared Cassidy, for inviting me to attend the annual race day in their community.

In country areas country race days contribute heavily to local economies. They give back to local economies and they are significant in the calendar. This government recognises that. Whilst there may be some changes to race meetings year to year, based on the lead of local clubs and local communities, I can inform the member that Racing Queensland advises me that they intend to continue to support these one-off yearly meetings in country Queensland. I thank the member for the question.

Mining Industry, Red-Tape Reduction

Mr MADDEN: My question is to the Minister for State Development and Minister for Natural Resources and Mines. Will the minister please advise how the government is cutting red tape for the resources sector?

Dr LYNHAM: I thank the member for Ipswich West for his question. The Palaszczuk Labor government knows that it is the private sector that creates jobs. That is why we are creating an environment for business and industry to thrive. That is why earlier this month I released a policy paper outlining a proposal for modernising Queensland's complex system of resources permits, authorities, leases and licences.

The paper examines new exploration and tenure systems that will cut red tape for miners, improve post-mining rehabilitation, encourage innovation and protect landholders. The current mining, petroleum and gas exploration and production tenures are regulated by five separate acts. This makes our tenure systems quite complex, duplicative, overprescriptive, administratively inefficient and generally unresponsive to the needs of the globalised resources sector.

The proposed innovative resources tenure framework will change that. It is the latest stage in a reform project that started under Labor six years ago. Key changes include: five new uniform authorities for information, exploration, development, production and infrastructure; all exploration authorities to have set terms with no renewal; incentives for early and strong exploration performance, balanced with handing back land halfway through the term of the authority; and more flexibility to give explorers incentives—for example, to amend their work on the ground according to the work they are achieving.

For landholders, which is most important, it will make doing business with miners and explorers easier. These proposed changes will make exploration tenures uniform, whether they are for coal, minerals or petroleum. This modernised, flexible framework will be an essential part in maintaining Queensland's competitiveness in a rapidly changing—

Ms Trad interjected.

Mr Seeney interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: I think the Deputy Premier and the member for Callide want to have a discussion. Would you like to continue with that outside?

Mr Seeney: I would love to have a long discussion.

Mr SPEAKER: Maybe later on this evening.

Dr LYNHAM: I encourage landholders, industry and community members to read the policy paper now available on the DNRM website, attend one of the many public information sessions scheduled around the state and make a submission before the closing date of 16 October. I hope to introduce this legislation to parliament and put this work into effect in the second half of 2016. This work was proudly started by the Leader of the House, Mr Stirling Hinchliffe.

Racing Queensland

Mrs STUCKEY: My question without notice is to the Minister for Sport and Racing. Racing Queensland's annual report tabled yesterday shows an annual profit of \$23 million, \$3 million cash in the bank and zero debt. Does this not show that the minister's claims of a crisis in Racing Queensland were entirely manufactured and simply designed to discredit the previous administration rather than support the racing industry in Queensland?

Mr BYRNE: I find this incredible. It is incredible that we have an opposition that would ask a question of that nature. The annual report clearly reflects the factual circumstances of Racing Queensland—factual circumstances that were revealed to this government by the administrators, by KPMG. Those issues were actually being flagged by the Audit Office leading up to this position. What we have had to do as a government is get a level of comfort to underpin that audit report. I find it extraordinary—

Mr Nicholls interjected.

Mr BYRNE: I take the interjection from the member opposite simply because there are a number of questions that many would like answered about the previous government's engagement with the racing industry. What we would like to know is what discussions were had between previous members of the government and what assurances were given to previous identities within the racing industry. Otherwise, why would the previous treasurer be so animated about this issue—an issue that is clearly identified by KPMG and independent auditors.

When we removed the boards on the back of the MacSporran report, there was no personal reflection involved in any of that. We were acting exclusively on the recommendations of Mr MacSporran. Mr MacSporran's recommendations were certainly not criticised by those opposite. They still have not criticised Mr MacSporran or his recommendations.

As the Premier indicated, the day the report was handed down we acted decisively on the first three recommendations. There was no personal reflection. There has not been one skerrick of political agenda here whatsoever.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr BYRNE: It might be the way those opposite operated in the last term, but I can say to anybody in this House that nobody has approached me and nor would they because they understand the nature of my character.

What we see is an ex-treasurer, the member for Clayfield, who must have had more knowledge about the trajectory of Racing Queensland because of his role. Why is he so animated today? Why is he so ramped up about it today? Because he does not like the truth of what the report says. The Auditor-General makes the financial position very clear. These are facts—facts.

Mrs Stuckey interjected.

Mr BYRNE: The fact is that the shadow minister simply does not understand how to read a statement of affairs that mouths the platitudes of people who have something to defend. They simply cannot read a report. It is clearly evident where we are.

Mrs Stuckey interjected.

Mr BYRNE: It is a disgraceful question, and I suggest you learn to read a report.

Mr SPEAKER: Before I call the member for Gladstone, member for Currumbin, if you persist with that sort of behaviour you will be warned and invited to leave the chamber for a short amount of time. That is your first warning.

Skilling Queenslanders for Work

Mr BUTCHER: My question is to the Attorney-General and Minister for Training and Skills. Will the minister update the House on training programs being delivered to drive a skilled workforce in Gladstone and across Queensland?

Mrs D'ATH: I thank the honourable member for his question. I know he is very passionate about making sure that the Gladstone region has the skills and training programs in place to provide the skills for local workers. As I updated the House earlier this morning, last week I was pleased to announce the successful projects under the first round of the reinvigorated Skilling Queenslanders for Work initiative. Community organisations, training providers and non-profits will be delivering a range of skilling programs across the state.

In Gladstone we saw local organisations submit successful applications that are examples of the range of projects rolled out across the state. For example, Energy Skills Queensland will be providing certificate training in hospitality, in scaffolding and in business; the Gidarjil Development Corporation will be delivering training in conservation and land management; and the PCYC will be training in early childhood education.

In Cairns, where I launched the first round last week, I met with the Association of Marine Park Tourism Operators, who will once again deliver a fantastic training package for young people in the region—training in business but also in first aid and in deep sea diving and first aid as a part of a program to remove crown-of-thorns starfish from the Great Barrier Reef. The great thing about this program is that it is not just benefiting those participants in relation to skills and gaining jobs but also helping our tourism area by tackling this important issue in relation to the environment in removing the crown-of-thorns starfish. One hundred and twenty-five participants have been through this program in the past—85 per cent went on to find jobs as a consequence. That is a pretty good success rate—85 per cent going on to find employment.

In Far North Queensland, we see a range of training targeting industries including tourism, retail, hospitality, community services and projecting the reef. In Townsville, we have the In-STeP, Industry-School Training Partnerships Association, and the Queensland Youth Services delivering programs. In Logan, in South-East Queensland, FSG Australia will deliver their Flexible Skills Growth

Project. In the Moreton Bay region, we will see Challenge Employment and Training providing community based training in retail pathways and construction. In Ipswich, BoysTown will be delivering community based training so members of that community can develop skills in process manufacturing and vocational pathways.

This is a successful initiative. We encourage those organisations who have been unsuccessful in the first round to get in contact with the department of education and get feedback on where they can improve their applications. We are eager to see them reapply and be successful in future rounds, because we want to grow this great state and we can only do it in partnership with our not-for-profit organisations and with our training providers.

Multicultural Affairs, Employment

Mr ELMES: My question without notice is to the Minister for Multicultural Affairs. Will the minister commit to extending the work the former LNP government did with Access Community Services in order to ensure we secure more industry partnerships to help newly arrived Queenslanders into work?

Ms FENTIMAN: I thank the member for the question. I am very proud to be the multicultural affairs minister at this time. There are a number of vulnerable refugees and migrants that we need to work harder to support. I have been working very closely with Access Community Services in my own community in Logan and with a number of settlement organisations to support our multicultural communities.

Finding multicultural members of our community, migrants and refugees pathways into employment is something that this government is absolutely committed to doing. We are absolutely committed to generating jobs and helping refugees and migrants find those skills to lead them into employment pathways. There is not one single approach that will help overcome the barriers faced by migrants and refugees and achieve the employment outcomes that we need so see. By capitalising on the resources and expertise of my department and our partners, we will set a target of supporting an additional 400 migrants and refugees in the 2015-16 financial year, which is significantly higher than the previous government's jobs target.

Following the introduction of the first multicultural recognition legislation that Queensland will see, my department will be developing a new multicultural policy and action plan that will outline significant strategies to help drive employment for our culturally and linguistically diverse Queenslanders. I am happy to report to the House on a new initiative that I have asked my department to consider. I will be working with the Public Service Commissioner to ensure that there are employment pathways for workforce participation in our government for people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. I believe that this government, as the largest employer in this state, should be a model employer, and making sure that we can find employment pathways within the Public Service for migrants, refugees, those members from our culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds will be a priority for me and this government.

I am pleased to say, as the Attorney has outlined today, that the Skilling Queenslanders for Work program will be coming back to Queensland, and culturally and linguistically diverse communities are a key target group for this very successful program. Eight thousand Queenslanders will be supported in the Skilling Queenslanders for Work program this financial year—

Mrs D'Ath: Just this round.

Ms FENTIMAN: Just this round—and I am pleased to see that our culturally and linguistically diverse communities will be a priority group for that very successful program. Already we have seen in just the first round a number of organisations successful in their tenders that will work specifically with migrants and refugees and members of our multicultural communities. We are determined to find those employment pathways for culturally and linguistically diverse Queenslanders.

(Time expired)

Mr SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister.

Mrs Smith interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: I do not need your assistance, member for Mount Ommaney.

Tenants' Advice and Referral Service

Ms FARMER: My question without notice is to the Minister for Housing and Public Works and Minister for Science and Innovation. Will the minister please inform the House how the Palaszczuk government is delivering on its commitment to help Queensland tenants maintain their tenancies in public and private rental housing?

Ms ENOCH: I thank the member for the question. I know that the member is a strong advocate for tenants in her electorate and is committed to standing up for their rights and protecting their interests.

More than half a million Queensland households currently rent their homes, and every one of those households are affected by Queensland's tenancy laws at some stage—from signing up to a new lease or claiming back their bond. Our government believes that all Queensland tenants should have access to strong, independent advice and advocacy to help them when they need it. These services are important because they help Queenslanders through disputes with their landlord which can often be complex and confusing. We are talking about issues like unsatisfactory living conditions, threats of eviction and bond disputes.

That is why the previous Labor government established the Tenant Advice and Advocacy Service of Queensland. Shamefully, the Newman government axed this important service. In doing so, Queensland became the only state in Australia without a government funded independent tenant advisory service. This left around 70,000 Queenslanders without the support they needed to successfully maintain their tenancies. Without access to independent advice, many tenants, particularly the state's most vulnerable, were left stranded—unable to access information to exercise their rights and understand their responsibilities under Queensland law. This was a great concern for many Queenslanders. That is why we took restoring this service to the election and acted immediately to re-establish an interim telephone service.

I am pleased to announce today that the Palaszczuk government is fully restoring this important service for Queenslanders. We have committed \$26.4 million over four years to reinstate this service. Following a robust tender process, I am pleased to announce that Tenants Queensland has been awarded a contract to provide the new statewide Tenants' Advice and Referral Service. This contract for the next three years is an initial investment of almost \$18 million. Tenants Queensland put forward a comprehensive proposal which includes partner organisations from across the state. This partnership model will ensure that, whether they live in Goondiwindi, Brisbane, Hughenden or Napranum, Queensland tenants once again have access to tenant support services. The new service will commence on 1 October this year, enabling a smooth transition from the interim telephone service which has also been run by Tenants Queensland in partnership with Enhanced Care. I am proud to say that the Palaszczuk government is standing up for Queenslanders by delivering this important service. I also acknowledge Penny Carr from Tenants Queensland who is present in the gallery and welcome her to Parliament House on this very important day for Queensland tenants.

Bruce Highway, Caloundra Road to Sunshine Motorway Upgrade Project

Mr DICKSON: Can the Minister for Main Roads confirm that the state government's contribution of \$226.8 million for the Bruce Highway—Caloundra Road to Sunshine Coast Motorway project will be retained and that the project will include the construction of the western service road to be completed in one stage from 2016 to 2020, as announced on 17 July 2015?

Mr BAILEY: I can confirm that work is progressing well on the project, with commencement of a double early contractor involvement process for the design and construction of the upgrade as announced on 3 September. Design consultants will now use—

Honourable members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: One moment, Minister. Members, the member for Buderim has indicated that he is not able to hear the answers. I urge members who want to have a conversation to take it outside.

Mr BAILEY: The design consultants will now use the revised layout as a flexible platform that may allow for potential design mitigations to be made to further mitigate environmental business impacts.

I understand there is concern over the removal of the Frizzo Road and Pignata Road entry and exit ramps. TMR does not envisage any upgrade scenario where all four of the exit 190 ramps remain. Highway functionality and safety are of paramount importance, and the revised preferred planning layout was developed with these in mind. The current distance between the interchanges and the on-ramp from Pignata Road and both of the Frizzo Road ramps do not comply with current highway design standards.

While the distance of the south-bound Pignata Road off-ramp meets certain standards, TMR has some concerns with the operation and safety of this section of highway in terms of the future Palmview Connection Road and the businesses located in the area. However, following feedback from our consultation process, TMR is now considering what options might be available to further assess the viability of retaining the off-ramp. It is important to note that only after an alternative access arrangement

is in place would these ramps be removed. This will create a much safer environment for motorists both on the highway and on the service road. To truncate my answer as there is only 15 seconds to go, at this stage we do not believe the schedule will be delayed in any way. There is ample time for adjustments to be made in terms of the design. I know there are some local environmental and business concerns.

Infrastructure Projects

Mr de BRENNI: My question is also directed to the Minister for Main Roads, Road Safety and Ports and Minister for Energy and Water Supply. Will the minister advise the House what the government is doing to secure economic development and to increase jobs through federal government support for critical infrastructure projects such as the M1?

Mr BAILEY: I thank the honourable member for Springwood for his question and congratulate him on his active interest in M1 issues. It is good to see a member for Springwood who really goes into bat for his local community. Queensland has \$15 million of investment across our road system and up to 15,000 jobs over the next four years, but we do not have consistent application of federal government principles in terms of road funding. The federal government is applying 80-20 to the Gateway Arterial North, 80-20 to the Toowoomba Second Range Crossing, 80-20 to the Warrego Highway and 80-20 to the Bruce Highway yet wants to apply a different formula to Logan. They want to change the rules. What has the federal government got against Logan? We want the same deal. I call on the new Prime Minister, Malcolm Turnbull, to start giving Queensland its fair share of infrastructure funding without requiring that assets be sold.

(Time expired)

PRIVILEGE

Alleged Deliberate Misleading of the House by a Minister

 **Mr WALKER** (Mansfield—LNP) (4.06 pm): I wish to raise a matter of privilege suddenly arising. During question time, the Attorney referred to a question I asked in relation to a disclosure return and implied that that disclosure return may be in fact a third-party return. The minister muttered darkly about ethics committees, misleading the House and so on. I have here the return in question. It is a disclosure return from the CEPU Plumbing Division, Queensland. The second page shows that it is a donation to a candidate, Yvette D'Ath, PO Box 986, Redcliffe, Queensland—

Honourable members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: One moment, members. Member for Mansfield, this is not an opportunity for you to make a speech. What is your matter of privilege?

Mr WALKER: I wish to table the disclosure return to correct the information of the Attorney-General and suggest that maybe it is she who should be referred to the Ethics Committee.

Tabled paper: Electoral Commission of Queensland Disclosure Return—Donor to Candidate (Yvette D'Ath) in the name of CEPU Plumbing Division of Queensland, dated 2 June 2014 [[1087](#)].

Mr SPEAKER: If the member for Mansfield would like to write to me about this matter, I will consider it.

 **Hon. YM D'ATH** (Redcliffe—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for Training and Skills) (4.07 pm): I rise on the matter of privilege. I table the return of the Australian Labor Party, state of Queensland, that shows the \$10,000 donation was made to the party office and was disclosed in the ALP return.

Tabled paper: Electoral Commission of Queensland Disclosure Return—Registered Political Party (Australian Labor Party State of Queensland), for the period 1 July 2013 to 30 June 2014 [[1088](#)].

TRANSPORT LEGISLATION (TAXI SERVICES) AMENDMENT BILL

Introduction

 **Mr KATTER** (Mount Isa—KAP) (4.08 pm): I present a bill for an act to amend the State Penalties Enforcement Act 1999, the Transport Operations (Passenger Transport) Act 1994 and the Transport Operations (Road Use Management) Act 1995 to provide for the recording of demerit points against

the traffic history of a person who provides a taxi service without a taxi service licence or peak demand taxi permit. I table the bill and explanatory notes. I nominate the Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources Committee to consider the bill.

Tabled paper: Transport Legislation (Taxi Services) Amendment Bill 2015 [1089].

Tabled paper: Transport Legislation (Taxi Services) Amendment Bill 2015, explanatory notes [1090].

I also table a petition from 4,586 Queensland citizens who hope to draw to the House's attention the issue of the continued operation of illegal taxi services in Queensland and how this undermines not only taxis but all state regulations.

Tabled paper: Non-conforming petition regarding illegal taxi services in Queensland [1091].

These signatures are in addition to those tabled to the House this morning. The petition requests the House to move swiftly to effect the necessary legislative changes to the Transport Operations (Passenger Transport) Act 1994 which is exactly what our bill aims to do. We are listening to the people of Queensland and I hope that other parties of the House will as well. The Transport Legislation (Taxi Services) Amendment Bill 2015 increases penalties targeting illegal taxi operators and thereby deters noncompliance with the Transport Operations (Passenger Transport) Act 1994.

Illegal taxi services are circumnavigating the Queensland taxi industry at a rapid rate and to the detriment of our society. This situation threatens the standards and safety of our taxi services across the state. This situation also erodes the integrity and viability of the taxi licensing scheme administered by the Queensland government. It is evident that existing penalties are not sufficient to deter the increase in illegal taxi services in Queensland. This is an issue that the KAP, myself and the member for Dalrymple feel very passionately about. We are the first in Australia to put forward legislation to tackle illegal taxi services. This taxi service has come from nowhere. It is a multinational corporation that has circumnavigated the existing regulations to mimic the activities of our established taxi service.

Illegal taxi services have now expanded to eight Australian cities, and by the end of the year one in 10 Sydney residents will have used a ride-sharing service. There are now 2,000 illegal taxidrivers across Queensland. Up to 12 July 2015, the state had issued 1,500 infringement notices to drivers of illegal taxi services, with a total value of more than \$1.7 million. To let this continue means the government is undermining its own revenue base and its own legislation. We understand there will be a review of the taxi industry at the end of this year that aims to address some of these issues. These illegal services are operated by large multinationals whose profits go overseas, while the taxi industry provides some \$90 million in GST revenue to the Commonwealth.

Taxi licences, for those who have purchased them, are becoming significantly devalued and worthless. I want to address the comments that have been made in the media by one of these service providers. They said that the people who invested in these licences originally went in with their eyes open. If we applied that same rationale to a number of other industries, I think there would be outrage—similar to the outrage we are getting from taxidrivers now. The taxi industry has been formed on regulations that have been carefully considered within this parliament over the years, and those regulations sit there for a purpose and those laws sit there for a purpose. If someone from the outside comes in and tries to circumnavigate those laws and outcompetes the existing people who have invested heavily in that industry, I think that is an unfair advantage and it goes against the purpose of us making all those regulations in the first place in this House.

As our party has a strong presence in regional areas, this is taking a brave step. We have always been in favour of a regulated market. I draw the attention of the House to comparisons in other industries that could face the same threat. For many years, the major supermarkets have been staring down the pharmacies in a bid to deregulate pharmacies so they could sell pharmaceuticals in their shops, but common sense has prevailed and people have realised that the service provided by those pharmacies and the investment they have made mean the system is working well—that is, the pharmacies provide good services the way they operate now. In the same way, we have heavy regulations in the hotel industry that provide a safe environment where we can engage socially and drink alcohol. We do not want people serving alcohol from underneath their house and thereby circumnavigating the laws. So too we do not want people using private vehicles to do the service that is undertaken by a regulated taxi industry.

The taxi industry has always met, and often exceeded, the standards set by the state government. We need to ensure these standards continue to be met through the regulated market. Many of the laws that exist now that govern the taxi industry were based on the internal policies that grew out of the taxi industry—that is, the government followed the industry that was self-regulating. Whilst it is not a perfect industry and there is always room for improvement, it is worth noting that many of the regulations that are in place now have actually been recommended by the industry itself.

I think that is in sharp contrast to the operations of this new operator into the market that has amassed some \$1.7 million in fines under our existing laws. That operator is now presenting a separate set of laws as a proposal to the government and saying, 'We want these laws. We acknowledge we're not abiding by the existing laws, but we want you to change your laws so we can practise within the framework of the law.' That is the recommendation that is being put by one of the operators at the moment, and I feel that is the tail wagging the dog. I think when people come to set up a business in the state they should initially observe the laws that are in place, and then if they want to change them down the track they should wait for the change in laws and then operate under those standards. They cannot tell the government how they are going to operate and then start operating straightaway and circumvent the existing laws. That is not right.

Taxis are legally required to provide a community service obligation. They provide transport for over one million wheelchair bound passengers per year in Queensland. Somehow we are going to have to find a way to cart them when they are not cross-subsidised through the taxi industry. They do not get charged any extra at the moment for carting these people in wheelchairs. The other operator that is out there at the moment is UberAssist and they do have a function that will assist people in wheelchairs. That is operating in New South Wales but it is not mandated, and that is an important point to make. At the moment, 20 per cent of the industry needs to be able to accommodate wheelchair access. That is a good thing that has been done by the government. It is there for a purpose, but it is being advocated that it be bypassed. The claim that it is accommodated by this alternative service is simply false and misleading. There will be a significant depletion of transport for those with a disability if we move towards deregulation.

The taxi industry also has GPS tracking, fitted cameras and a rolling 24-hour criminal history check on all drivers. These are safeguards that are put in place for the safety of the customer. We do not feel that the penalties being advocated in this proposed bill are overly harsh or unjust. They are in line with the government's latest road safety initiative on mobile phones. We have heard the calls of the small business owners of the taxi industry. There are some 60,000 small businesses that are built around the taxi industry in Queensland, and we believe they deserve action. The actions of illegal taxi services are uncompetitive. If they want their services to continue, they must meet the standards and regulations set by the state government. They must respect our laws.

In the development of this bill, the KAP has considered the multiple submissions made by Uber. We understand their proposal for a transportation network company framework. We acknowledge those and we have observed those, but until such a framework has been legislated multinational companies should not ride roughshod over Queensland laws. The Queensland Taxi Strategic Plan 2010-2015 will come up for review at the end of the year, and we are sure there will be changes to the taxi industry. Legal process is not something we are against. I should state again that if the services that are out there at the moment are legal—as they claim—then they have nothing to worry about with this bill. We are not against competition in the industry and we look forward to working with all legal transportation operators offering any form of competition.

For this reason, the bill targets those drivers delivering illegal taxi services and subjects such individuals to demerit points and fines. This is necessary to maintain the standard and safety of taxi services across the state. The bill is consistent with the objects of the Transport Operations (Passenger Transport) Act 1994. This is to achieve the best possible public passenger transport at reasonable cost to the community and the government, while facilitating market entry restrictions in the public interest.

Specifically, the bill amends the Transport Operations (Passenger Transport) Act 1994 by introducing demerit points against persons guilty of providing a taxi service without a taxi service licence or a peak demand taxi permit. That is another factor that should be taken into consideration here. If you have a taxi licence in Queensland, you are obligated to take calls 24/7. So if it is four o'clock in the morning and a Uber driver does not want to wake up or they want to apply surcharges if they do, you will not be protected from that. If the taxi industry collapses—and make no mistake: they are under serious threat of a serious collapse—you will be subject to surge pricing. You might be stuck out at the airport at four o'clock in the morning or in the suburbs at three o'clock in the morning because no-one can be bothered getting out of bed. Under the current regulations they are made to get out of bed; they are made to provide that service. If this industry is allowed to fall over, which is a very strong risk and a very likely outcome if we do not intervene, that is the outcome we could be facing. We should be ready to explain to all Queenslanders if this bill is not supported.

The bill also makes consequential amendments to other legislation, as already mentioned. It provides a strong and strategic response to the sustainability of the taxi industry in Queensland.

First Reading

Mr KATTER (Mount Isa—KAP) (4.19 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a first time.

Question put—That the bill be now read a first time.

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a first time.

Referral to the Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources Committee

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Elmes): Order! In accordance with standing order 131, the bill is now referred to the Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources Committee.

APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL (NO. 2)

Message from Governor

 **Hon. CW PITT** (Mulgrave—ALP) (Treasurer, Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships) (4.20 pm): I present a message from His Excellency the Governor.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Elmes): The message from His Excellency recommends the Appropriation (Parliament) Bill (No. 2) 2015. The contents of the message will be incorporated in the *Record of Proceedings*. I table the message for the information of members.

MESSAGE

APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL (No. 2) 2015

Constitution of Queensland 2001, section 68

I, PAUL de JERSEY AC, Governor, recommend to the Legislative Assembly a Bill intituled—

A Bill for an Act authorising the Treasurer to pay an amount from the consolidated fund for the Legislative Assembly and parliamentary service for the financial year starting 1 July 2014

GOVERNOR

Date: 15 SEP 2015

Tabled paper: Message, dated 15 September 2015, from His Excellency the Governor, recommending the Appropriation (Parliament) Bill (No. 2) 2015 [[1092](#)].

Introduction

 **Hon. CW PITT** (Mulgrave—ALP) (Treasurer, Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships) (4.20 pm): I present a bill for an act authorising the Treasurer to pay an amount from the Consolidated Fund for the Legislative Assembly and Parliamentary Service for the financial year starting 1 July 2014. I table the bill and the explanatory notes. I nominate the Finance and Administration Committee to consider the bill.

Tabled paper: Message, dated 15 September 2015, from His Excellency the Governor, recommending the Appropriation Bill (No. 2) 2015 [[1093](#)].

Tabled paper: Appropriation (Parliament) Bill (No. 2) 2015, explanatory notes [[1094](#)].

The Appropriation (Parliament) Bill (No. 2) 2015 seeks parliamentary approval of supplementary appropriation for unforeseen expenditure incurred by the Legislative Assembly and the Parliamentary Service in the 2014-15 financial year of \$2.934 million. The unforeseen expenditure incurred by the Legislative Assembly and the Parliamentary Service was primarily in relation to one-off expenses for the 2015 state general election, the fire protection system at Parliament House and upgrades to the finance system. Together with the Appropriation Bill (No. 2) 2015, which is also introduced today, total supplementary appropriation for 2014-15 is \$12.044 million.

First Reading

Hon. CW PITT (Mulgrave—ALP) (Treasurer, Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships) (4.21 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a first time.

Question put—That the bill be now read a first time.

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a first time.

Referral to the Finance and Administration Committee

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Elmes): Order! In accordance with standing order 131, the bill is now referred to the Finance and Administration Committee.

Portfolio Committee, Reporting Date

Hon. CW PITT (Mulgrave—ALP) (Treasurer, Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships) (4.21 pm): by leave, without notice: I move—

That under the provisions of standing order 136 the Finance and Administration Committee report to the House on the Appropriation (Parliament) Bill (No. 2) 2015 by 20 October 2015.

Question put—That the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

APPROPRIATION BILL (NO. 2)

Message from Governor

 **Hon. CW PITT** (Mulgrave—ALP) (Treasurer, Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships) (4.22 pm): I present a message from His Excellency the Governor.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Elmes): The message from His Excellency recommends the Appropriation Bill (No. 2) 2015. The contents of the message will be incorporated in the *Record of Proceedings*. I table the message for the information of members.

MESSAGE

APPROPRIATION BILL (No. 2) 2015

Constitution of Queensland 2001, section 68

I, PAUL de JERSEY AC, Governor, recommend to the Legislative Assembly a Bill intituled—

A Bill for an Act authorising the Treasurer to pay amounts from the consolidated fund for particular departments for the financial year starting 1 July 2014 and to amend the Financial Accountability Act 2009 for a particular purpose

GOVERNOR

15 SEP 2015

Tabled paper: Message from the Governor regarding the Appropriation Bill (No. 2) 2015 [[1095](#)].

Introduction

 **Hon. CW PITT** (Mulgrave—ALP) (Treasurer, Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships) (4.22 pm): I present a bill for an act authorising the Treasurer to pay amounts from the Consolidated Fund for particular departments for the financial year starting 1 July 2014 and to amend the Financial Accountability Act 2009 for a particular purpose. I table the bill and the explanatory notes. I nominate the Finance and Administration Committee to consider the bill.

Tabled paper: Appropriation Bill (No. 2) 2015 [[1096](#)].

Tabled paper: Appropriation Bill (No. 2) 2015, explanatory notes [[1097](#)].

The Appropriation Bill (No. 2) 2015—the bill—provides supplementary appropriation for unforeseen expenditure in 2014-15. Unforeseen expenditure is expenditure from the Consolidated Fund above the amount approved by annual appropriation on an individual department basis. Yesterday I tabled the 2014-15 *Consolidated fund financial report*, or CFFR, which outlines by department total appropriation from the Consolidated Fund for the financial year. The CFFR includes any unforeseen expenditure and provides explanations on a department basis for variations from the approved annual appropriation amount.

The bill seeks parliamentary approval of supplementary appropriation for unforeseen expenditure incurred by seven departments in the 2014-15 financial year of \$9.110 million. Together with the Appropriation (Parliament) Bill (No. 2) 2015, which is also introduced today, the total supplementary appropriation for 2014-15 is \$12.044 million. This is the lowest amount of unforeseen expenditure over the past 18 years. The unforeseen expenditure incurred by the seven departments was primarily in relation to additional expenditure for the support services delivered by the Queensland Agricultural Training Colleges and capital projects such as police station and watch-house upgrade and refurbishment. The introduction into parliament of the bills for supplementary appropriation on the day after the tabling of the CFFR enables parliamentary scrutiny of unforeseen expenditure.

The bill also amends section 71 of the Financial Accountability Act 2009. Currently this section provides that departments can, with the Treasurer's approval, borrow amounts from Queensland Treasury Corporation. Finance lease arrangements are considered to be a form of borrowing. However, QTC is no longer in the business of leasing. An amendment to section 71 is required so that departments are not limited to borrowing—in relation to leasing—from QTC. Under section 71, departments will continue to only borrow with the Treasurer's approval. Departments will continue to undertake traditional borrowings from QTC except in exceptional circumstances and only with the Treasurer's approval. Departments will be able to engage with parties other than QTC for the purpose of obtaining a finance lease or entering into any other financial arrangement which constitutes a borrowing but only with the Treasurer's approval. In order to ensure that there is appropriate governance to support this amendment, the associated policy documents will be updated to clearly state the appropriate borrowing arrangements for traditional borrowings, leasing and other financial arrangements that constitute a borrowing.

First Reading

Hon. CW PITT (Mulgrave—ALP) (Treasurer, Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships) (4.25 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a first time.

Question put—That the bill be now read a first time.

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a first time.

Referral to the Finance and Administration Committee

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Elmes): Order! In accordance with standing order 131, the bill is now referred to the Finance and Administration Committee.

Portfolio Committee, Reporting Date

Hon. CW PITT (Mulgrave—ALP) (Treasurer, Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships) (4.26 pm): by leave, without notice: I move—

That under the provisions of standing order 136 the Finance and Administration Committee report to the House on the Appropriation Bill (No. 2) 2015 by 20 October 2015.

Question put—That the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

JOBS QUEENSLAND BILL

Introduction

 **Hon. YM D'ATH** (Redcliffe—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for Training and Skills) (4.26 pm): I present a bill for an act to establish Jobs Queensland to give advice to the state on skills needs, workforce development and planning and the apprenticeship and traineeship system in Queensland. I table the bill and explanatory notes. I nominate the Education, Tourism and Small Business Committee to consider the bill.

Tabled paper: Jobs Queensland Bill 2015 [[1098](#)].

Tabled paper: Jobs Queensland Bill 2015, explanatory notes [[1099](#)].

I am pleased to stand here today and introduce the Jobs Queensland Bill 2015. The Palaszczuk government is committed to growing the economy and building new and innovative industries in Queensland. To achieve this, we need to develop the highly skilled and productive workforce required to meet the needs of the future. Jobs Queensland is part of our broader plan to make Queensland's vocational education and training sector the strongest and most productive in the nation to ensure industry can access the skills it needs to fuel growth. This plan also includes the reintroduction of the successful Skilling Queenslanders for Work initiative and the introduction of our Rescuing TAFE plan, which incorporates the repeal of the Queensland Training Assets Management Authority Act 2015 and the introduction of an independent Training Ombudsman.

The establishment of Jobs Queensland will allow for a focused effort on workforce planning and engagement across a range of industries in Queensland. Funding of up to \$10 million per annum has been allocated to establish and operate Jobs Queensland. The bill establishes the new authority and describes its statutory functions and governance arrangements while providing flexibility and longevity to allow Jobs Queensland to be responsive to changing economic and industry needs.

Under the bill, Jobs Queensland will have three key functions. It will provide advice to me, as Minister for Training and Skills, on: skills needs for particular industry sectors or regional areas; future workforce development and planning; and the apprenticeship and traineeship system. It will also have a research function and be required to publicly promote its role and functions.

Jobs Queensland will identify the skills and training needs across all industries to inform priorities for this government's significant investment in VET. The Department of Education and Training will remain responsible for the supply side, making decisions about designing and delivering programs, managing the VET budget and investing in priority training. The department will also continue to regulate the apprenticeship and traineeship system.

Separating the strategic advisory role from the regulation of apprenticeships and traineeships reinforces that the new entity is different from its predecessors. It allows the authority to focus on genuine industry engagement and the identification of demand for skilled work across the economy at the strategic level.

Jobs Queensland will also be more responsive than previous engagement bodies. Jobs Queensland will not be tied to a strict and one-off annual reporting cycle; rather, Jobs Queensland will provide advice to me on an as-needed basis throughout the year as issues arise. In addition, under legislation I will be provided with the power to refer matters relevant to Jobs Queensland's functions for investigation and action throughout the year as they arise, ensuring the skills system as a whole can react responsively as matters arise.

Jobs Queensland will not have a direct role in advising government on matters of employment policy, which will remain the responsibility of Queensland Treasury. Under the bill I will be able to influence the work undertaken by Jobs Queensland, for example, through issuing a written statement, a statement of expectations, about how they should perform their functions and reporting requirements. Jobs Queensland must also produce a public annual report about how it has performed its functions; however, importantly neither the department nor I can direct the content of the advice that Jobs Queensland provides.

I am thoroughly committed to ensuring the independence of Jobs Queensland, the independence of its membership and the independence of its advice. I believe it is imperative that industry is free to form an independent view on where future skills demand is likely to occur within the economy—a view that is not influenced by the department, government priorities or historical arrangements and a view that is solely focused on accurately identifying skills demand. We need to give industry its voice back on skills. Jobs Queensland's advice and reports will be one key input to help inform priorities for state investment in skills, training and workforce planning and inform the development of strategies and programs to respond to these priorities.

Unlike the recent ministerial industry commission, Jobs Queensland will be established under legislation as an independent entity. Members will be appointed through a governor-in-council process, and I am focused on ensuring that there are the right skills and expertise necessary to deliver high-quality advice to government. The bill also specifically states that a member of the Legislative Assembly cannot be a member of Jobs Queensland to further ensure its independence. Jobs Queensland will also have an additional focus on workforce planning, which the previous ministerial industry commission did not have. The new entity will reinstate independent industry leadership on workforce planning to support enhanced productivity and improve the responsiveness of skills development to industry skills demand.

The membership of Jobs Queensland will consist of between seven to 12 members who are appointed by the governor-in-council for a term of up to four years. In general, it will be important to have the right mix of representatives from different sectors as well as different technical skills relevant to the functions of Jobs Queensland. The bill provides for a mix of industry leaders, an equal number of employer representatives and union representatives, as well as members with expert or specialist skills in areas such as finance, workforce planning, economics and marketing.

To ensure that the important work of Jobs Queensland can commence as soon as possible, a Jobs Queensland interim reference group will be created. The group will operate until Jobs Queensland is established and the Jobs Queensland chairperson and members are appointed. I am currently working with the Department of Education and Training to establish a list of representatives to form the interim reference group. Upon my selection, these representatives will be considered and endorsed by the Premier and Minister for the Arts. This is a critical initiative to ensure that both the department and I have access to independent and unbiased advice on future skills needs across the economy.

The work of Jobs Queensland will improve our ability to target our training programs towards the needs of the future. This will ensure that individuals can access training where the jobs are so they get the most out of their training and that businesses have access to the skilled and productive workforce required to drive economic growth. I commend the bill to the House.

First Reading

Hon. YM D'ATH (Redcliffe—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for Training and Skills) (4.34 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a first time.

Question put—That the bill be now read a first time.

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a first time.

Referral to the Education, Tourism and Small Business Committee

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Elmes): Order! In accordance with standing order 131, the bill is now referred to the Education, Tourism and Small Business Committee.

Portfolio Committee, Reporting Date

Hon. YM D'ATH (Redcliffe—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for Training and Skills) (4.34 pm), by leave, without notice: I move—

That under the provisions of standing order 136 the Education, Tourism and Small Business Committee report to the House on the Jobs Queensland Bill by 20 October 2015.

Question put—That the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

COUNTER-TERRORISM AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Introduction

 **Hon. JR MILLER** (Bundamba—ALP) (Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services and Minister for Corrective Services) (4.35 pm): I present a bill for an act to amend the Fire and Emergency Services Act 1990, the Police Service Administration Act 1990, the Public Safety Preservation Act 1986, the Terrorism (Preventative Detention) Act 2005 and the Weapons Act 1990 for particular purposes. I table the bill and explanatory notes. I nominate the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee to consider the bill.

Tabled paper: Counter-Terrorism and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2015 [\[1100\]](#).

Tabled paper: Counter-Terrorism and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2015, explanatory notes [\[1101\]](#).

I am pleased to introduce the Counter-Terrorism and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2015. It has been nearly 10 years since the Queensland parliament passed the Terrorism (Preventative Detention) Act 2005. The act is an effective tool which is designed to protect the Queensland community from imminent or recent terrorist attacks while achieving an appropriate balance between individual

rights and freedoms. It included unprecedented powers which enabled police to detain persons for up to 14 days to prevent an imminent terrorist attack or for preserving evidence following a recent terrorist attack.

The act gave effect to Queensland's commitment to introduce complementary preventative detention legislation following the Council of Australian Governments special meeting on counterterrorism on 27 September 2005. As part of the COAG agreement the act contains a sunset provision, with the act set to expire at midnight on 16 December this year. In the second reading speech for the Terrorism (Preventative Detention) Bill 2005, the then Premier and Treasurer Peter Beattie commented that he hoped that these laws would not be needed in 10 years time.

Unfortunately, Australia is now undergoing the most significant ongoing threat from terrorism that it has ever faced. Queensland, like other Australian jurisdictions, has residents who are considered a security concern and who are the subject of investigations. The number of persons travelling overseas to participate in the conflict, the number of residents prevented from participating in the conflict and known supporters are all increasing. While the threat of large scale casualty and infrastructure attacks remain, there is also an increasing threat of low-tech lone-actor terrorist attacks.

This threat is significantly harder to disrupt, as there may be no visible planning of the terrorist act and limited time between a terrorist forming their intention and undertaking the terrorist attack. Over the last 12 months there have been two incidents of terrorist attacks in Australia and six planned attacks have been prevented. This has resulted in two terrorists being fatally wounded and 23 people being charged. Due to the nature of terrorism, police may need to intervene early to prevent a terrorist act from occurring or they may need to act on less information than would be the case in more traditional policing responses.

Preventative detention legislation remains a valuable tool to aid police response to an imminent or recent terrorist attack. The Palaszczuk government is determined to ensure that Queenslanders are protected as far as possible from acts of terrorism; however, it is not the government's intention that preventative detention legislation form a permanent part of Queensland's statute book. Nor should the legislation remain for longer than is required to address the threat of terrorism. The current threat level means that when it comes to the Terrorism (Preventative Detention) Act it is far better to have it and not need it than need it and not have it.

The bill amends the Terrorism (Preventative Detention) Act 2005 to extend its operation for a further 10 years. The bill also requires a review of the need for, and effectiveness of, the preventative detention legislation to be commenced within four years. The bill requires a report on the outcome of the review to be tabled in the Legislative Assembly within five years. However, this amendment does not prevent the review and subsequent report being undertaken at an earlier time.

The bill also amends the extraterritorial application of the Terrorism (Preventative Detention) Act 2005 to ensure that preventative detention orders are available to be used where a vessel is intercepted or boarded outside of Queensland's coastal waters. This extends to a distance of 200 nautical miles seaward of the territorial sea baseline or to the edge of the continental shelf, where it extends further.

The bill also amends the Public Safety Preservation Act 1986 to ensure the powers under the act apply outside Queensland to the full extent of the extraterritorial power of the parliament. This includes powers relating to emergency situations, terrorist emergencies and chemical, biological and radiological emergencies. This amendment will enable police to exercise emergency incident powers necessary to effectively deal with the emergency in Queensland even though the origin of the emergency is across the state border. For example, police would be able to close off roads and evacuate residents in Coolangatta to protect them from toxic gases leaking from a vehicle carrying dangerous goods across the border at Tweed Heads. Further, police would be able to exercise powers to resolve a siege occurring on a vessel outside Queensland's coastal waters.

For a terrorist emergency under part 2A of the act, the extraterritorial application enables the use of powers under the act to declare and intercept a vessel well before it enters Queensland. The ability to intercept a vessel outside of Queensland's coastal waters creates a significant buffer to protect Queensland from acts of terrorism originating in the maritime environment. The amendment will also ensure that a declaration of a 'vehicle' as a declared area for a terrorist emergency can be made before the vehicle enters Queensland. It also ensures that a declaration of a vehicle or vessel as a declared area for a terrorist emergency can continue in situations where the vehicle crosses over the state boundary or travels outside Queensland's coastal waters.

The bill amends the Fire and Emergency Services Act 1990 to expand the definition of 'occupier'. There are a number of budget accommodation buildings throughout Queensland. Many of these properties are commonly rented by backpackers or those employed in the fruit-picking industry. While

budget accommodation suits those on a low income, it is vital that rooms are safe to live in. There is no excuse for accommodation providers ignoring basic fire safety measures including functioning smoke alarms, clear access to fire escapes and adherence to maximum occupancy provisions.

I commend Queensland Fire and Emergency Services for their recent efforts in shutting down a budget accommodation firetrap in the Lockyer Valley where six fruit pickers were living.

Mr Rickuss: Hear, hear! Fully support it.

Mrs MILLER: Thank you for your support, member for Lockyer. There must be adequate deterrence to those who provide unsafe accommodation. The expansion to the definition of 'occupier' will ensure that accommodation providers who do not comply with fire safety requirements do not avoid prosecution. It will ensure absent occupiers, rent masters such as lessees who sublet to multiple persons, and managers of illegally unsafe rental accommodation are held accountable for not providing safe accommodation.

The bill also amends the Weapons Act 1990 to recognise technical variations arising from federal machinery of government changes which occurred on 1 July 2015. The amendments allow an officer of customs to continue to be exempt in the carriage of their firearm in performing their role. A transitional provision for the amendment to the Weapons Act is included in the bill. This transitional provision will ensure that the powers conferred on officers of customs continues to apply in the period between 1 July 2015 and the commencement of the amendment of Queensland legislation to recognise the variations.

The bill will amend the Police Service Administration Act 1990 to reflect name changes arising from the federal machinery of government changes which occurred on 1 July 2015. The amendments will allow for the exchange of policing information provisions to continue to apply to the new Department of Immigration and Border Protection. Transitional amendments will ensure that the information-sharing arrangement provided for by the legislation continues to apply between 1 July 2015 and the amendment of the Queensland legislation.

The bill also amends the Police Service Administration Act 1990 by relocating the civil liability protections associated with Police Service reviews from section 16 of the Police Service Administration (Review of Decisions) Regulation 1990 to the act. These civil liability protections are more appropriately located in the act rather than a regulation. The amendment will also facilitate an updated regulation to the act being made in 2016. I commend this bill to the House.

First Reading

Hon. JR MILLER (Bundamba—ALP) (Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services and Minister for Corrective Services) (4.46 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a first time.

Question put—That the bill be now read a first time.

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a first time.

Referral to the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Elmes): Order! In accordance with standing order 131, the bill is now referred to the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee.

Portfolio Committee, Reporting Date

Hon. JR MILLER (Bundamba—ALP) (Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services and Minister for Corrective Services) (4.47 pm), by leave, without notice: I move—

That under the provisions of standing order 136 the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee report to the House on the Counter-Terrorism and Other Legislation Amendment Bill by 2 November 2015.

Question put—That the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

MOTION

Order of Business

 **Hon. SJ HINCHLIFFE** (Sandgate—ALP) (Leader of the House) (4.47 pm), by leave, without notice: I move—

That government business orders of the day Nos 1 to 7 be postponed.

MOTION

Yeerongpilly Transit Oriented Development, State Planning Regulatory Provision

 **Hon. JA TRAD** (South Brisbane—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Minister for Transport, Minister for Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning and Minister for Trade) (4.48 pm): The ratification of the Yeerongpilly Transit Oriented Development State Planning Regulatory Provision 2014 is the final step in the process that will enable the development of the exciting Yeerongpilly Green precinct. The planning framework comprising the State Planning Regulatory Provision 2014 and a detailed plan of development were prepared in partnership with the Brisbane City Council and subject to community consultation in 2014 prior to the State Planning Regulatory Provision 2014 being made and gazetted on 24 September 2014.

The Yeerongpilly Transit Oriented Development State Planning Regulatory Provision 2014 sets out the statutory requirements for the development and is based on the land use, public realm, movement and other plans depicted in the detailed plan of development. The ratification of the State Planning Regulatory Provision 2014 formalises the planning framework which will deliver on the government's commitment to the development and construction industry in Queensland.

Economic Development Queensland within the Department of Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning selected Consolidated Properties and LJCB Investment Group as the preferred development partner for the site in April of this year and the ratification of the state planning regulatory provision 2014 allows Consolidated Properties to progress with the exciting proposal of Yeerongpilly Green. Around 250 jobs and approximately \$30 million of community amenities will be created through the construction of this \$850 million development. I therefore move—

That the Yeerongpilly Transit Oriented Development State Planning Regulatory Provision 2014, as tabled on 5 May 2015, now be ratified.

 **Mr NICHOLLS** (Clayfield—LNP) (4.50 pm): I am very happy to rise to speak in support of the motion before the House today, because of course it is yet another vote of confidence in the former government's plan to grow the Queensland economy in part of the four pillars we identified in the construction and property area. In that respect, I am of course delighted to—

Ms Trad: We started it. Come on, Tim! We started it!

Mr Hinchliffe: I am in the room! Don't ignore me!

Mr NICHOLLS: Mr Deputy Speaker, they impugn to me their own motives. They thought I was not going to recognise the member for Sandgate. They thought that I, like them, would try to claim credit for everything! Nothing could be further from the truth. But, unlike those opposite—and I am here to support the motion—who want to claim credit for things like the Queen's Wharf development or the Toowoomba Second Range Crossing or the \$8 billion going into upgrading the Bruce or any of those projects or the schools PPP which is delivering 10 new schools throughout Queensland or the new six-car train sets that we are delivering and indeed the project that we are talking about here at Yeerongpilly Green, I am happy to acknowledge that this is the culmination of a lot of work that started back in 2009. In fact, the first state planning regulatory provision was passed in 2011 and entertained TODs, but TODs have been around for a long time. In some way, shape or form I have been told about TODs since 2000. TODs have been proposed at places such as Albion in my electorate and they have been proposed—

Mr Bailey interjected.

Mr NICHOLLS: The member for Yeerongpilly is going to speak next. He has been around even more but delivered fewer. He has been around longer but delivered fewer.

Mr Bailey: Oh, Tim!

Mr NICHOLLS: Well, I had to. It is part and parcel of the deal. If you turn up here you cannot expect all bouquets, especially when you do not deserve them. TODs have also been spoken about at Milton, but finally we have one that actually looks like it is going to get off the ground.

I do want to pay particular credit to the former planning minister and former deputy premier, Jeff Seeney, whose department continued the work and, of course, initially saw the state planning regulatory provision gazetted in September 2014 after a very lengthy period of consultation. I also want to particularly acknowledge the contribution by Consolidated Properties, whose tender was in at the time the government changed, supported by Hutchinson Builders—two great Queensland operations that I am sure many in this House know and have spoken about, and I note that Consolidated Properties is in a joint venture. This is a 10-year program that will see the revitalisation of that inner southern part of Brisbane about eight or so kilometres from the GPO and in that sense it is good to see that work proceeding.

I do in particular acknowledge the hard work by all involved, particularly in the department, in making sure that this long process comes to fruition. We are going to see 10 years worth of work there. We are going to see jobs created. We are going to see new housing there. Importantly, this is not just high-end riverfront housing—there is already some of that along King Arthur Terrace at the Mirvac development along the river—but also the provision of affordable housing as well. It is very important that the mix is got right. Plans will change and markets will determine some of those outcomes, as it should be. But the intent is to ensure that this plan does provide a mix of housing styles and prices so that all can enjoy living in and around Brisbane. For that reason I am very happy to support it and, in yet another outbreak of peace, harmony and goodwill, say that I wish this project all the best. Congratulations to the winning tenderers.

 **Hon. MC BAILEY** (Yeerongpilly—ALP) (Minister for Main Roads, Road Safety and Ports and Minister for Energy and Water Supply) (4.54 pm): I rise to join my colleagues the Deputy Premier and the member for Clayfield to speak in support of this motion. Unlike the Brisbane City Council days, we might disagree a lot less here, member for Clayfield. Economic Development Queensland has been working with the selected preferred development partner, Consolidated Properties and LJC Investment Group, for the Yeerongpilly Green project. The ratification of the Yeerongpilly Transit Oriented Development State Planning Regulatory Provision 2014 is the final step in the process that will enable the creation of around 250 jobs through the construction of this \$850 million development on what was the old animal husbandry farm located for many decades beside the then Tennyson power station, which is now of course the Tennyson tennis centre. Obviously, this precinct will be vastly different from its recent history.

The planning framework, comprising the SPRP and a detailed plan of development, provides for a mix of apartment and retail development accessible to major employment nodes such as the Princess Alexandra Hospital, the University of Queensland and the Rocklea and Archerfield industrial precinct. Yeerongpilly Green will provide a new main street retail and commercial precinct and a range of housing opportunities close to existing active and public transit networks. The planning framework provides for the re-use of the heritage buildings on site, reflecting that history, as outlined before, and adds to the substantial green and public spaces already available in the area, including riverfront access. Existing and future residents will have green space recreational areas, with approximately \$30 million of community amenities to be created as part of the Yeerongpilly Green.

It is also important to note that the planning framework also provides for the future expansion of the Queensland Tennis Centre, home to the Brisbane International tournament, which draws the best tennis players in the world to Brisbane each January in the lead-up to the Australian Open and, of course, draws a lot of investment and spending into the Brisbane and South-East Queensland economy. The proposed development will provide a significant increase in amenity for players and visitors. The project is the culmination of work over three terms of government over many years. Yeerongpilly Green will create and add a new and diverse community in southern Brisbane. I therefore support the motion that the Yeerongpilly TOD State Planning Regulatory Provision 2014, as tabled on 5 May 2015, be ratified.

Question put—That the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

HEAVY VEHICLE NATIONAL LAW AMENDMENT BILL

Resumed from 19 May (see p. 633).

Second Reading

 **Hon. JA TRAD** (South Brisbane—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Minister for Transport, Minister for Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning and Minister for Trade) (4.57 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

I want to thank the Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources Committee for its consideration of the bill and its recommendation that the bill be passed. I also want to thank the Local Government Association of Queensland, the Australian Trucking Association and the Queensland Trucking Association for taking the time to make submissions to the committee on the bill. Industry plays an important part in the ongoing review and development of the national law and it is important to recognise the detailed consideration and feedback on the bill provided by key industry stakeholders. The Heavy Vehicle National Law is central to a complex and vital national reform that has the potential to deliver great benefits to the heavy vehicle industry and the broader community. Streamlining regulation of the heavy vehicle industry under a single National Heavy Vehicle Regulator has the potential to significantly improve productivity and efficiency in the movement of freight by road across Australia. I want to recognise the hard work that goes into coordinating and preparing amendments to the Heavy Vehicle National Law and thank the officers from the National Transport Commission—

Mr Rickuss interjected.

Ms TRAD:—who have travelled from Melbourne to be present for the debate of this bill, so please behave, Ian. This bill will pave the way for the implementation of a number of further reforms, including the adoption of intelligent transport technology to better manage driver fatigue and the further harmonisation of penalties for offences under the national law. The bill also contains a number of amendments that will reduce administrative or regulatory burden for the NHVR and the heavy vehicle industry, clarify existing requirements to aid interpretation of the HVNL, improve the enforceability of the HVNL, and address technical drafting issues.

The bill includes important amendments to existing provisions around the use of electronic work diaries that are needed before the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator can begin approving electronic work diaries for use across Australia. This is a significant step forward in the use of technology as a means of improving the regulation and, in turn, the safety of the heavy vehicle industry.

One of the issues of concern raised by the Australian Trucking Association in its submission related to the potential for electronic work diaries to be mandatorily imposed on operators by way of accreditation or through their chain-of-responsibility obligations. There is no doubt that electronic work diaries would be an effective means by which operators can fulfil their record-keeping obligations under fatigue management accreditation or for monitoring and managing driver fatigue more broadly.

But electronic work diaries are just one way that these obligations can be achieved. I must stress that the adoption of electronic work diaries is voluntary. It provides operators in the industry with a choice to either adopt this emerging technology or continue, as they currently do, with the paper based system. This is about providing flexibility for industry to choose the approach that fits best and recognises that there can be significant differences from one road transport operator to another.

I know that there are also concerns among some in the industry about the potential for Big Brother type of monitoring of their operations to occur with electronic work diaries. I would like to take this opportunity to again assure the industry that this is not the intention. The bill makes key amendments to include specific provisions to protect the information collected by the system and how it can be used. It establishes significant offences for anyone found to be inappropriately using information collected by electronic work diaries for any purpose other than the fatigue related compliance function under the law without a warrant. The maximum penalties for electronic work diary protected information offences are \$20,000. I note that the committee considered that this high penalty was appropriate given the severity and nature of the offence.

Another key issue from industry's perspective is the detection and treatment of minor breaches of work and rest time. I note that the issue of treatment of small breaches was also an issue of concern raised by the Australian Trucking Association and to which the committee paid particular attention. The bill makes an allowance for small breaches of work requirements totalling not more than eight minutes in a 24-hour period not to incur a penalty. This allowance recognises the real-time recording of work and rest periods that occurs to the minute in an electronic work diary. This will ensure that drivers using electronic work diaries are treated fairly with respect to minor breaches that would not otherwise be apparent in a written work diary because of the way time is rounded.

The National Transport Commission has undertaken to review the treatment of small breaches after two years from the initial uptake of electronic work diaries by industry. This review will focus on assessing the impact of the eight-minute rule on driver fatigue and from a compliance and enforcement perspective.

Electronic work diaries present a real opportunity to improve safety within the heavy vehicle industry by providing drivers and operators with real-time information that can be used to more effectively manage driver fatigue. Drivers will benefit from a system that will alert them when a required

rest break is approaching. It will also be of particular benefit to the many drivers who struggle with the complex requirements of recording and calculating their work and rest times in a written work diary. Operators will have more information on which to base their safety management systems and review their drivers' work schedules. Employers will also benefit from no longer being required to keep onerous paper based record-keeping systems for each of their drivers. Instead, electronic records can be kept and produced if and when required.

The bill also amends a number of penalty provisions to ensure consistency and equity in penalty amounts for similar offences contained in the heavy vehicle national law. The revised penalty amounts were identified as part of the development of the national penalties framework prepared by the National Transport Commission. As I am sure members would appreciate, getting national consensus across all of the jurisdictions on penalty levels has been one of the more challenging aspects throughout the development of the heavy vehicle national law. The penalty levels established in the first two heavy vehicle national law bills aligned penalty levels for offences as closely as was possible at the time with state and territory penalty frameworks. However, there remains a number of anomalies and inconsistencies with the national penalties that the National Transport Commission undertook to review as part of the development of the national penalties framework. The National Transport Commission has since concluded its review and made a number of recommendations for changes to penalties, which were subsequently endorsed by the Transport and Infrastructure Council ministers. The amendments to penalty levels contained in the bill are consistent with the recommendations endorsed by the ministers.

I think it is worth mentioning the proposed changes to penalties for disclosing or misusing personal information collected for the purpose of intelligent access under chapter 7 of the heavy vehicle national law. On the face of it, the penalty increases look quite extreme, with maximum penalties for offences rising from \$6,000 to \$20,000. However, it is important to note that these penalties apply to only a very small group of people who have a specified regulatory role under the heavy vehicle national law and not to the heavy vehicle industry more broadly. The change will bring the penalty for specified people, such as intelligent access service providers, auditors and Transport Certification Australia for misusing intelligent access information into line with similar offences for other officials misusing protected information under the heavy vehicle national law.

This bill represents the next step in what is an ongoing program of national reform for the heavy vehicle industry. Once again, I thank the committee for its detailed consideration of the bill. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mr EMERSON** (Indooroopilly—LNP) (5.05 pm): I rise to speak to the Heavy Vehicle National Law Amendment Bill 2015. The Heavy Vehicle National Law Act 2012—or HVNL—provides for the consistent regulation of heavy vehicle operations across most of Australia and established the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator to administer the law. The bill amends this HVNL and provides for the implementation of further national reforms for the heavy vehicle industry by facilitating the introduction of electronic work diaries and greater harmonisation of penalties under the HVNL.

The bill also makes a number of minor and technical amendments identified by the HVNL maintenance process managed by the National Transport Commission that aims to improve safety outcomes and corrects minor errors. The amendments contained in this bill have been endorsed, as the minister has indicated, by the Transport and Infrastructure Council. It was developed by the National Transport Commission in consultation with officers from each state and territory agency, the NHVR and peak industry associations. Consultation was also undertaken with the Australian Local Government Association and Transport Certification Australia. All stakeholders have indicated their support for this bill. The committee has also recommended that the bill be passed and the LNP opposition will be supporting the bill.

When discussing this bill, it is important to consider the value of the heavy vehicle industry to Australia. These regulations apply to heavy vehicles over 4½ tonnes gross vehicle mass. When I was the minister in the previous government it was very clear to me the significance of this industry not just to Australia but particularly to Queensland—a wonderful industry made up of people, many family businesses and also large national and some international businesses. But the clear indication was that the freight task was going to increase over the next decade or two, particularly for those heavy vehicles. I note that Ferrier Hodgson, as outlined in its *Transport and logistics insights 2014* report, found the following—

Australia's transport and logistics industry generates approximately \$201 billion a year in revenue, accounting for 15% of GDP, and is linked to every traditional industry in our economy. The industry is expected to undergo significant growth in the coming decades with our freight task predicted to double by 2030.

That quote serves to highlight the importance of these regulations in ensuring that the industry performs in the most productive and safest way possible.

In government, the LNP did what it could to support our heavy vehicle industry not only by implementing the necessary reforms to allow for the effective regulation of this industry but also by building the infrastructure that the industry needs. It was the LNP that made a record \$8.6 billion investment in the Bruce Highway—that corridor of commerce for our state, those 1,700 kilometres—working with the federal government to improve the safety, the capacity and also the flood mitigation of that artery for our state. It was also the LNP that began the work to deliver the Toowoomba Second Range Crossing—a piece of infrastructure that will further unlock the productive capacity of the Darling Downs. Of course, again in partnership with the federal government, the LNP delivered on the first roadworks funded under a \$635 million upgrade to the Warrego Highway and just north of Brisbane the work on the Gateway North upgrade. It was under the LNP that this legislation was first enacted and it was the LNP state government, through the Department of Transport and Main Roads, that stepped in to help the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator in processing heavy vehicle permits following concerns raised by the industry.

As the minister mentioned, many of these changes are technical in nature, but she did quite rightly mention electronic work diaries. EWDs do provide an alternative to the written work diary for fatigue regulated drivers to record their work and rest hours and this can help increase accuracy and minimise errors that are inevitably made in completing written diaries. EWDs also automatically record and calculate work and rest periods for drivers. The system would work to alert drivers when a mandatory rest period is approaching so the rest can be taken. When this was being discussed, and in the committee as well, some minor issues were highlighted during the pilot program regarding the privacy of data, the enforcement approach in relation to small breaches and implementation costs. Despite these particular issues, the implementation of EWDs has received strong support, as highlighted by the Australian Trucking Association when it said that EWDs offer the prospect of a considerable reduction in the red-tape burden faced by operators and drivers, as well as potential improvements in fatigue compliance for some operators. The operational pilot of electronic work diaries found that a nine per cent take-up of EWDs could deliver more than \$200 million in savings in net present value terms to operators, EWD system managers and authorities over five years.

The LNP opposition notes the committee's comments in relation to the concerns raised by the heavy vehicle industry during the pilot, but the committee was satisfied that these concerns had been addressed during the drafting and consultation of this bill. As I said before, the original legislation was enacted under the LNP, but I do acknowledge that when that legislation did come through it was supported by the then opposition, now government. I think that both sides of parliament acknowledge that we want to see in this industry a reduction in unnecessary regulation and duplication and to make sure that we have a harmonised system that does improve the efficiency and effectiveness of this industry.

I would like to commend the Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources Committee for its consideration of this bill. As previously stated, this bill does represent continuing strong progress towards the harmonisation of heavy vehicle legislation across Australia and the reduction of red tape for the heavy vehicle industry. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mr PEARCE** (Mirani—ALP) (5.12 pm): I rise as the chair of the Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources Committee to speak in support of the Heavy Vehicle National Law Amendment Bill, which is now before the House. The Heavy Vehicle National Law is a single national system for the regulation of heavy vehicles. This amendment bill facilitates the introduction of electronic work diaries and harmonises the penalty provisions endorsed by the Transport and Infrastructure Council. This amendment is about joining other participating jurisdictions. The Heavy Vehicle National Law, HVNL, and regulations kicked off across New South Wales, Queensland, the ACT, South Australia, Tasmania and Victoria on 10 February 2014. The National Heavy Vehicle Regulator, NHVR, is about one set of rules for heavy vehicles over 4.5 tonnes gross vehicle mass. Under the one set of rules principle, state and territory police, authorised officers and Main Roads inspectors are able to enforce heavy vehicle offenders under the HVNL. Heavy vehicle registration, inspections, driver licensing and those matters relating to the carriage of dangerous goods are still covered by relevant state and territory authorities. I understand that for legal and court processes there has been no significant change to that which was in place prior to the national law kicking off.

For an industry that can cross several borders on a single job, the EWD, or the electronic work diary, is the start of a new era in technology where we have a computerised device setting the times for heavy vehicles and drivers to operate under. The EWD is an evidence based manager of fatigue for

drivers. The EWD will capture if a driver is being compliant with fatigue as set down under the HVNL and ensures that drivers do not do more than the maximum work hours or rest less than the minimum rest hours over the set period as determined by the law. While this technology is important to best practice heavy vehicle movements, I am having trouble working out what the impact will be on heavy vehicle users in regional and rural Queensland where there are long distances between approved parking areas where a driver can stop for a period of time and meet the requirements of a rest period.

I have driven around Central Queensland and I have been in every state in Australia. It concerns me that you can have seasonal conditions which could mean that a driver has to enter areas where roads are flooded or are about to be flooded. In today's world everybody is kept up to date through the media. If a driver is going into that sort of environment it means that the driver may have to do an additional 30 or 40 minutes behind the wheel to pass through such an area, or there may be a safe area to pull off the road some 10 or 20 kilometres further up the road and the driver can stop there and meet all duty of care principles with the vehicle. There are situations where a driver may have to make a decision about where he actually stops. He could make a decision that he stops well within his time because he knows that an area is going to be affected by floodwaters or there has been an accident on the road or we might find a situation where we have drivers making a dash. This is a serious issue. As we heard in the hearings process, a driver may have up to eight minutes extra time if required to cover those couple of examples. If I have it wrong, I would ask the Deputy Premier to explain that to me so it is on the record. In regional areas there are often very narrow roads and long distances between safe pull-over areas. I know the Department of Main Roads is putting more of those in. When you drive around as I do, you know that the heavy vehicle drivers have identified areas that they try to make it to so they can pull over in safety.

Mr Rickuss interjected.

Mr PEARCE: No. You would not want the law enforcers out there taking advantage of drivers who are trying to do the right thing, trying to meet all the requirement but for other reasons are unable to stop driving when they are supposed to. That will be monitored over time and we will see how it goes. It will be interesting. I remain somewhat concerned that drivers may be dealt with harshly because they have made a common-sense decision to go that extra mile in the interest of being able to continue the trip at a later time or to find a safe area to pull off the road.

I understand that work trials have tested the effectiveness of the electronic work diaries for fatigue management. Those trials should have picked up issues that could have potential consequences for drivers, such as in the examples that I have just been talking about. I am all for making our roads safer. Technology is good and well-intentioned, common-sense and well-timed reviews are essential. I am sure that the reviews will focus on those areas that will come through as the trials and the common use of the electronic diaries occur.

The committee reviewed concerns raised in submissions that related to the voluntary nature of the EWD, the need for a review process and the practical application of the eight-minute tolerance for work periods. The committee sought advice on those issues and was satisfied with the department's advice that presently there is no proposal that EWDs will be a mandatory requirement for operators and drivers operating under basic fatigue management accreditation. I think it is a good thing that people understand that this is a voluntary situation. I guess most of us who use the roads frequently would like to see EWDs taken up by more companies that have their trucks on the roads. I have a little bet that sometime into the future, when they see that it is working, it will probably be made compulsory. It is good that we are not looking to do that until it has been proven.

The TIC has agreed that the NTC should review the EWD changes to assess the impact on fatigue risk compliance and enforcement after two years of the initial uptake by the industry and that the NTC agrees that the review of the eight-minute tolerance should be reflected in its forward work plan. Again, I am happy to see that that is happening, because I would be very surprised if, within a couple of years, some issues do not rise to the top of the concerns that drivers and owners find themselves experiencing.

The bill now before the House also harmonises the penalty provisions in the national law across states and territories. The NTC undertook a national review of the penalties in 2013-14 and developed a national penalties framework. The framework contains the underpinning principles for establishing the appropriate penalty for offences, taking into account comparable state and territory penalties and identified anomalies with the current penalty levels for some offences within the HVNL. No-one likes to have to meet the cost of monetary penalties for breaches of road rules or management rules, especially in the heavy vehicle industry, because those penalties are usually high. They hit the pocket of the driver or the company pretty tough. I have heard drivers talking at roadside cafes. When you are on the road

you can always work out which is the best cafe, because that is where all the truckies have pulled up. I have listened to them talk about how they were fined, the level of the penalty and the frequency of the penalty. Sometimes you wonder if they are actually being targeted while they are out there doing their job. Therefore, for me the best thing to come out of the harmonisation of the penalty framework is that penalties are now consistent across all states and territories. Every driver knows that the monetary penalty will be the same no matter where they are and what the breach is. The committee supported the proposed amendments to the national law and recommended that the bill be passed.

At this time in the proceedings I acknowledge and place on the record the commitment to the task of committee members. As chair of the committee, I like to see teamwork happening and that is the case with the Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources Committee.

Mr Butcher interjected.

Mr PEARCE: I have a great team member here. Committee members are not frightened to put their heads down and take up the ball, as they say, although it is usually the member for Keppel who has to do the fast trip up to the front line. I acknowledge the deputy chair and member for Burleigh. While we may not always agree, like me and other committee members he can get on with it and do the work of the committee in the way that Queenslanders would expect. Hats off to the committee members: the member for Keppel, the member for Gladstone, the member for Gregory, the member for Dalrymple and also the member for Burleigh. To the committee secretariat led by Erin Pasley, what can I say? What an honour and a pleasure it is to be linked with such a hardworking and professional team. They are always ready to offer advice and the quality of the work that they do is nothing short of outstanding. As one, the committee commends them all for the work that they do.

I would like to see where all this finishes up in the next couple of years. I hope to be still in this place when we hold a review and may have to make changes to the legislation. However, I am very happy that both sides of the parliament support this bill. I commend it to the House.

 **Mrs LAUGA** (Keppel—ALP) (5.25 pm): I rise to speak in favour of the Heavy Vehicle National Law Amendment Bill 2015. The Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources Committee unanimously recommended that the Heavy Vehicle National Law Amendment Bill 2015 be passed. I thank the witnesses who appeared before the committee at the public briefing held on Wednesday, 3 June 2015. Thanks go to Mr Marcus Burke, Program Director, Heavy Vehicle Compliance and Technology, National Transport Commission; Ms Kelli Cumming, Senior Manager, Heavy Vehicle Industry, Department of Transport and Main Roads; Mr Graham Fraine, Deputy Director-General, Customer Services, Safety and Regulation, Department of Transport and Main Roads; and Mr Jeremy Wolter, Manager, National Law, National Transport Commission.

This bill was developed by the National Transport Commission in consultation with all state and territory transport authorities, police agencies and peak industry associations and was endorsed by the Transport and Infrastructure Council ministers in 2014. This bill represents the strong progress that continues to be made towards the harmonisation of heavy vehicle legislation across Australia and the reduction of red tape for the heavy vehicle industry. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mr LAST** (Burdekin—LNP) (5.26 pm): I rise to speak to the Heavy Vehicle National Law Amendment Bill 2015 and the importance that this bill has to our heavy vehicle industry not only in Queensland but also right across Australia. Having been a police officer for 25 years, I have had a lot of experience dealing with heavy vehicle investigations, with heavy vehicles involved in traffic accidents, which sometimes were fatal, and with escorting heavy vehicles throughout Queensland. Certainly I am very familiar with the important work that the heavy vehicle industry does in transporting produce around this great state. It is an industry that continues to grow and we intend to really rely upon it as we go forward.

This bill ensures that the consistent and equitable regulation of the heavy vehicle industry is maintained across participating jurisdictions. I cannot stress how important that is. I have pulled up truck drivers and asked them to produce a driver's licence or paperwork and they have said, 'Which copy would you like to see?', because they had various licences, logbooks et cetera, from across Australia. The uniformity and consistency in application across the country has made a difference in terms of safety. I cannot stress how important that is in reducing incidents involving heavy vehicles.

In the Burdekin electorate there are a number of heavy vehicle operators, from small family concerns to large companies. They perform a valuable role, particularly in the western and northern areas of the state where a lot of communities are totally reliant on road transport. Those trucks keep on rolling. In times of disaster, they have saved some northern communities by getting through with supplies, generators and that type of thing.

I have pulled up enough truck drivers and asked them for their diaries to know that the electronic work diary is a great concept. Those truck drivers get out and give you a dirty, filthy, oil covered diary that you cannot read because it has rolled around in the dirt, so it is nice to see that we are moving forward in the 21st century and that our truckies are starting to embrace technology that can only assist them and assist in the regulation of the industry, as well. I commend that particular aspect of the changes that are being put forward here today.

It is important to consider the increasing number of heavy vehicles on our roads. We often think purely of articulated vehicles, road trains et cetera. It is also important to understand that these provisions relate to agricultural machinery. In an area such as the Burdekin we see the movement of excess dimension agricultural machinery on our roads. It is important to make sure that the movement of this machinery is regulated properly and that everyone understands the rules and regulations and that we continue to apply those standards to ensure that all road users are safe. I commend this bill to the House. I certainly support the passage of this bill through the House.

 **Mr BUTCHER** (Gladstone—ALP) (5.30 pm): Thank you for the chance to speak tonight on the Heavy Vehicle National Law Amendment Bill. I am sure members have heard the intriguing speeches on this bill so far. This is a very special bill to be talking about, particularly given the number of heavy vehicles used in my electorate of Gladstone with its wonderful port facilities.

I take this opportunity to thank my fellow members of the Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources Committee for the work they do in putting these reports together to present to the House. As the chairman of the committee commented earlier, the government, opposition and crossbench members of the committee worked well together when considering this bill. As the chairman did, I make special mention of the secretariat of our committee. Without the hard work that those ladies put in, it would make our job as committee members a whole lot harder. To the secretariat, I must say a special thankyou.

I start my speech on the Heavy Vehicle National Law Amendment Bill by giving some background to this reform. It is a national scheme that has been approved by ministers from around Australia who sit on the Transport and Infrastructure Council. The objective of this reform is to reduce the compliance burden for the heavy vehicle industry, improve Australia's international competitiveness, improve productivity and safety and make it easier for business to operate across state borders. That is important. Keeping our country moving is a vital part of this bill. We need to make sure that we do not have borders when it comes to moving around our country.

The objectives were achieved by the creation of the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator, NHVR, and a consolidated body of heavy vehicle legislation to govern all vehicles over 4.5 tonne, with the exception of matters relating to heavy vehicle driver licences, bus operator accreditation and the transport of dangerous goods. This bill amends the Heavy Vehicle National Law and provides for the implementation of further national reforms for the heavy vehicle industry by facilitating the introduction of electronic work diaries and the greater harmonisation of penalties under the national law.

Electronic work diaries are an alternative to the old-style written diaries for fatigue regulated heavy vehicle drivers to record their work and rest hours, which is vitally important. We know the number of road fatalities in Queensland which particularly involve trucks and heavy vehicles and the damage that those vehicles can cause. This bill makes sure that the drivers of these heavy vehicles have their breaks when they are doing long hauls across our country or are driving on the Bruce Highway or are driving on our western roads in Queensland, which is where our heavy vehicles are utilised to do the much needed work in our country.

During our hearing there were lots of questions regarding electronic work diaries. Most questions related to the difference in reporting using the written diaries and the new electronic diaries. The department had to clarify quite a few issues the committee had with regard to the difference between the written diaries that truck drivers and heavy vehicle drivers now use and the electronic diaries that are being trialled at the moment. The answers given by the department most definitely assisted the committee in gaining an understanding of the difference between what truck drivers and heavy vehicle write down when completing written diaries and what is recorded in an electronic diary. The argument we had was around timing and when truck drivers can put their hours into their diaries. Of concern was the time frame around writing hours down in a written diary as opposed to recording them in the electronic diary which is quicker and more precise. The committee was happy when the department explained that the electronic diary system makes an allowance of eight minutes. They still have a little flexibility which the written diary has. The work done by the department to give us the information that was required to make our recommendation was fantastic.

The use of these diaries will help keep pace with the changes in technology and international standards that we see in our state and country. It will help us keep on the front foot when it comes to maintaining world standards when it comes to the moving of equipment and natural resources around our state.

The electronic work diaries approved under this bill will replace, if drivers so choose, the written work diaries. The bill does not require drivers to use electronic diaries. It allows drivers to use a written diary, if they so choose. It is great that our truck drivers and heavy vehicle drivers can choose to use written diaries if they have used them for a long time.

Electronic work diaries offer the prospect of a considerable reduction in the amount of red tape faced by operators and drivers as well as an improvement in compliance for some drivers. The pilot for electronic work diaries found that a nine per cent take-up of electronic diaries could deliver more than \$200 million in net present value terms to operators, system managers and authorities over five years. As we heard during the hearing, currently there is a lot of paper shuffling involved and the moving of written diaries to a second person who collates them. They have to go through another system and it goes on and on. This takes a fair amount of time to get through. As I said, there could be \$200 million in savings over five years if there is a nine per cent take-up of the electronic diary system.

This bill also makes a number of minor technical amendments identified by the Heavy Vehicle National Law maintenance program managed by the National Transport Commission. They aim to improve safety outcomes and correct minor errors and reduce red tape for the heavy vehicle industry.

One of the more difficult issues to be harmonised under the heavy vehicle national law system has been the setting up of penalties for these offences. The National Transport Commission has undertaken a review of these penalties and developed a national penalties framework. The framework establishes the underpinning principles for setting the appropriate penalty level for these offences. The bill includes a number of amendments to existing penalties to address the identified inconsistencies in the system. In our proceedings the committee noted the national approach taken with respect to the amendment penalties in order to achieve consistency across those jurisdictions. In light of the development of this national framework, the committee considered that adequate justification was proven in this bill. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mr RICKUSS** (Lockyer—LNP) (5.39 pm): I rise to make a few comments on the Heavy Vehicle National Law Amendment Bill 2015. As I am sure a lot of members are aware, the Lockyer, and Gatton in particular, is a heavy vehicle transport centre. We have major companies there such as Nolan's, who introduced fatigue management into Australia—the basic fatigue management and the further advanced fatigue management, which the electronic work diaries will do. We also have the Lindsay Brothers, FreshwayZ and Market Transport. There are quite a number of them. Blenners Transport from the north quite often pull in there to work in cooperation with the other heavy transporters.

I am pleased that there will be a transition period to electronic diaries. Unfortunately, like the farming workforce, the truck driving workforce is an ageing workforce and a lot of older members would probably struggle a bit with the electronic diaries. They have got into the habit of using written diaries. I am sure that the transition will happen. As the younger drivers come through, there will be more uptake.

I am sure that the eight-minute leeway for breaks that they have been given will have to be reviewed. Quite often they will start up their diary or put something in their diary and then walk around the truck and start talking to a police officer or a heavy transport vehicle operator, and the time lines will then change. They are the sorts of things they manage with their diaries now. I am sure every now and again they pinch five minutes here and there.

The member for Mirani did bring up approved stops and dangerous goods. The issue of dangerous goods is important. I am glad to see the Deputy Premier in the House. In my area we have a lot of dangerous goods. I have a government explosives magazine, where the explosive trucks transport dangerous goods, and we have the transport of dangerous petroleum and that sort of thing. When they set out their time lines—and a lot of this is done quite well—say, when they are going to Rocky or Emerald, they will know which truck stops they are going to stop at. But if they pull up at a truck stop and there is another dangerous goods vehicle there, they cannot stop there; they have to keep going. So the best laid plans can be put aside. I realise that they should be making some allowances for that. But if there are two or three truck stops in a row where there is another dangerous goods vehicle, it can really create some problems and extra driving issues. These are the sorts of things that will have to be reviewed to make sure that we can manage those sorts of issues. I would like the minister to take that on board.

I think it is an oxymoron calling it the 'heavy vehicle national law' when Western Australia and the Northern Territory are not in the system. That makes it a furphy. It is not quite national; it is nearly national.

Mr Costigan: Semi-national.

Mr RICKUSS: Semi-national—yes, that is right.

Ms Trad: It is mostly national.

Mr RICKUSS: Mostly national, yes. There are some real issues that we have eliminated. I used to have truckies coming to see me about being pulled up in Victoria because the length was legal in Queensland and in New South Wales but was not legal in Victoria.

Ms Trad: That is why we needed a national law.

Mr RICKUSS: That is right. In New South Wales you had to have the rego sticker on the truck from the first day; in Queensland you had three weeks grace to get it mailed out. There were all those sorts of things.

I would advise the minister to review the whole program of electronic diaries, not just the eight-minute leeway. If you are going to do a review, let us do a proper review in two years time. I cannot see that there would be any disadvantage in doing that, particularly if it appears that there are problems with those electronic diaries. I know that truck drivers are pretty good at working out ways around the system if they can—whether they drop the electronic diary into a puddle of water or whatever, I do not know. I am sure there will be ways around the system because there are ways around the system now.

But what we do want are approved stops and better stops. This should be part of the management system. This national law should be about better truck stops for the truckies where they can go to the toilet, where they can put some rubbish in the rubbish bin, where they can have a shower and all of those sorts of things. As the member for Mirani mentioned, there are thousands of trucks pulled up on the side of the road where it is just a bush toilet. It really is a bit tough on some of them and then we are expecting them to drive these sorts of hours.

We have to make sure that there are facilities for the trucks and that we look after them. They do carry Australia on their back, as the sticker says. Let us make sure that, if they are minor errors that these people are being picked up for, common sense applies. I have a case that is with the minister at the moment. He filled out the work diary but did not total up the entries and he was picked up for that. The minister is reviewing that at the moment, so I am sure that will be looked at with common sense. That is what we want with these laws. A lot of these truck drivers are great truck drivers. They are quite intelligent people but book work is not their forte or working with electronic diaries is not their forte. So a bit of common sense is needed around those issues. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mr COSTIGAN** (Whitsunday—LNP) (5.45 pm): I, too, would like to make a small contribution tonight to the debate concerning the Heavy Vehicle National Law Amendment Bill 2015. Following in the footsteps of my learned colleague and friend the member for Lockyer, there is no doubt that for the regional MPs in the chamber tonight this legislation strikes a chord because we have many people in our electorates who proudly work in the trucking industry and transport industry. I was not here to hear the member for Mirani's contribution to this debate, but I would suggest that there is a lot of common ground right across the chamber in our passion to see better road safety outcomes.

Mr Butcher interjected.

Mr COSTIGAN: I hear the member for Gladstone at the back of 'parliamentary heights' chiming in. In all seriousness, he thinks this is a very serious issue as well. I travel about 80,000 kilometres on the road, mostly work related, travelling around Central, North and Far North Queensland. It pleases me no end every time I come through the Mirani electorate to Waverley Creek, which has been transformed for the benefit of the trucking industry, the travelling motorists, the grey nomads and on it goes. It is a good pit stop, as good as anywhere perhaps, on the eastern seaboard midway between the cities of Mackay and Rockhampton. We need to be doing more of that.

It would be remiss of me to get up here tonight and not pay tribute to some of the families of the trucking industry around Central and North Queensland—and I will come to that in a moment, as I see the member for Hinchinbrook nodding. There is one family in particular in his electorate that comes to mind. It would be remiss of me not to acknowledge the wonderful work of the Mackay based Road Accident Action Group, headed by the soon to be retired Graeme Ransley. It was terrific to be alongside the Minister for Main Roads in Mackay—the city that I represent; I know the member for Mackay was there as well—on what was a great day to celebrate the achievements of road safety in our state and to see RAAG, as they are known, be feted and recognised for their efforts. Their sterling efforts made me certainly very proud. I am sure that the member for Mackay, when we take the politics out of it, and

so we should, would have been proud as well to see RAAG recognised, along with Councillor Chris Bonanno, the chair. It was a proud moment for Chris. Our thoughts are with Chris and his family after his son was the victim of a cowardly one-punch attack in Mackay last weekend. To Chris Bonanno, Graeme Ransley and Noel Lang and the team, well done. They certainly deserve the recognition that they received at the recent Queensland Road Safety Awards in Mackay.

There is no doubt that the transport industry, the trucking industry, has moved along—no pun intended—with new technology and so forth. Hence we have seen the advent of electronic work diaries. I back up my colleague the member for Lockyer with regard to the compliance officers, the ‘scalies’—call them whatever you want—as they are affectionately known in many quarters. Needless to say, I think that a lot of truckies would be hoping that there is some common sense here and some flexibility as we enter a new phase in relation to these new arrangements.

In the Hinchinbrook electorate there is the Blennerhassett family and their Blennerhassett Transport base in the great town of Tully in Far North Queensland on the northern side of the Cardwell Range. I well remember Brett Blennerhassett from his days playing Foley Shield. They are a terrific family, and this brings back a lot of memories. Closer to home there is the McAleese company in Mackay, an iconic transport name not only in our region but also farther afield; Peter Haylock and his crew at Emerald Carrying Company; from the cattle industry’s point of view there is Willoughby’s at the foot of the Eton Range; and of course Pattels in Collinsville, represented by our great friend the member for Burdekin. There is no doubt that the implementation of these changes will be a learning curve for their staff and their drivers. I remember many moons ago when living in Rockhampton I travelled in a semi-trailer back to Macs Truckstop in Mackay so that I could see what the driver in the cabin—

Mr Brown interjected.

Mr COSTIGAN: I was not pulling anything on that trip, member for Capalaba! I did not touch the horn. There was nothing like that; It was all aboveboard. It was just great to see how it all happened and how the professionalism came to the fore. Sometimes truckies unfairly get a bad rap, but there are so many good truckies out there. We see the stickers on the back of their vehicles that show their pride in what they do in terms of their professional conduct.

This bill means there will be a new order, but I am sure there is no doubt that both sides of the House want continued road safety outcomes, be it in Central, North, Far North or Western Queensland or on the Capricorn and Flinders highways. I know what it is like pulling up outside the school at Torrens Creek for a sleep, but it is a different story driving a Commodore compared to a semi-trailer or a B-double. I have never driven one of those trucks, and I take my hat off to the drivers for their professionalism, because it is another world away.

We need that infrastructure in place on our highways. I have spoken to Graham Ransley about wanting a heavy vehicle rest stop halfway between Mackay and Bowen on the Bruce Highway, particularly around Bloomsbury where some terrible motor vehicle accidents occurred. The former LNP government did some excellent work in this respect. I take my hat off to former minister Emerson. I also salute the member for Maroochydore for getting amongst it as the shadow minister for main roads, for going into Cairns and saying, ‘You know what? I am going to Brisbane on a semi.’ Hats off to the member for Maroochydore for doing that not too long ago. I know that it was a worthwhile exercise for her. Again, I made it clear to her that we need some action in the medium to long term on improving road safety outcomes, particularly with heavy vehicle rest stops. Without duplicating what has already been said, I commend the minister—

Ms Trad interjected.

Mr COSTIGAN: We have not seen the Minister for Tourism in Airlie Beach.

I commend the Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources Committee for its consideration of the bill. As previously noted, the bill represents the good progress being made towards the harmonisation of heavy vehicle legislation across the Commonwealth and towards the reduction of red tape for the heavy vehicle industry. The other day I was addressing some issues on the Brigalow Belt and in the Nebo district in the Mirani electorate, because they do not see the member for Mirani that often. In this respect, more work needs to be done. I commend the bill to the House.



Hon. JA TRAD (South Brisbane—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Minister for Transport, Minister for Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning and Minister for Trade) (5.53 pm), in reply: I thank all members of the House who contributed to the debate on this bill. The debate before the House reinforces the support the Palaszczuk government continues to demonstrate for the heavy vehicle industry. It is very important to set the record straight in relation to the genesis of the heavy vehicle national law reform process and Queensland’s role in relation to it, because in fact the previous Labor

government first introduced the bill into this House before the parliament was prorogued during 2012. When the member for Indooroopilly says that this was an LNP achievement under the former government, I think he is being very liberal with the truth, if one could call it the truth.

In my opening remarks I referred to the importance of providing the heavy vehicle industry with the tools to improve productivity and efficiency in the movement of freight by road. In relation to some of the comments of the members for Mirani and Lockyer about the use of electronic work diaries and appropriate resting stops throughout regional Australia, I reinforce that none of the current provisions in relation to fatigue management will change. We are introducing a new tool, the electronic work diaries, to capture that information. In terms of the current provisions around fatigue management, nothing changes. I can confirm absolutely to the member for Mirani that, under the heavy vehicle national law, if there is nowhere safe for drivers of a heavy vehicle to pull up and rest there will be a defence for short rest break offences. If at the time the driver was required to take a short rest break there was no suitable rest place for fatigue regulated heavy vehicles and the driver had the short rest break at the next suitable rest place for fatigue regulated vehicles after that time on the forward route of the driver's journey and no later than 45 minutes after that time, the driver is required to have the short rest break. I reassure the member for Mirani that the current provisions remain in relation to defences where breaks cannot be taken. We are just introducing a new tool in terms of capturing that information.

For members who raised the issue in relation to the data-capturing process, I confirm that the NTC will be collecting the data for a future review of electronic work diaries. It is the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator that will undertake the electronic work diary program. The National Heavy Vehicle Regulator as well as the NTC will work together on the project to ensure that electronic work diaries are as effective and efficient as possible. Again, I emphasise that the bill contributes to the ongoing reduction of administrative and regulatory burdens for the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator and the heavy vehicle industry by clarifying existing requirements and improving the enforceability of the national law.

In closing, I again thank all who contributed to the debate tonight, particularly all my departmental officers and staff as well as the NTC and all industry groups involved in this bill for all of their hard work. I commend the bill to the House.

Consideration in Detail

Clauses 1 to 67, as read, agreed to.

Schedule, as read, agreed to.

Third Reading

Hon. JA TRAD (South Brisbane—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Minister for Transport, Minister for Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning and Minister for Trade) (5.58 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a third time.

Question put—That the bill be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

Long Title

Hon. JA TRAD (South Brisbane—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Minister for Transport, Minister for Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning and Minister for Trade) (5.58 pm): I move—

That the long title of the bill be agreed to.

Question put—That the long title of the bill be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

MOTION

Ethics Committee

 **Mr SPEAKER:** Honourable members, before commencing debate on the private member's motion, I wish to make it very clear that this motion and debate are simply about the timing of the committee's report and the provision of a document to the House with that report. I note that standing

order 271 restricts debate on the substance of the matter before the committee, and I warn all members that I will not allow the matter referred to the Ethics Committee to be debated in the House or any debate that could prejudice that matter. I will warn any member who strays from the strict topic under consideration and strays into argument about the matter before the committee rather than the issue of timing and the provision of the document.



Mr SPRINGBORG (Southern Downs—LNP) (Leader of the Opposition) (6.01 pm): I move—

- (1) That the House instruct the Ethics Committee to report by 13 October on the matter of privilege referred by the PCCC on 18 August 2015 relating to the alleged failure of a member to follow an order of the previous PCCC and alleged unauthorised disclosure of the committee's proceedings.
- (2) That at the time of its report the Ethics Committee table in the House the statement in relation to the destruction of documents referred to in the letter from the Acting Chair of the PCCC to the Speaker dated 17 August 2015, tabled in the House on 18 August 2015.

I think it is fair to say that, given the public interest and concerns around issues surrounding the member who has been referred to the Ethics Committee by the PCCC, it behoves the Ethics Committee to take the extraordinary step of making sure this matter is resolved as quickly as possible. Indeed, I think it is also fair to say that for some time this matter has been said to have been before the PCCC. Whether it was or whether it was not is not a matter that most members of this House will ever really truly know because of the privacy provisions that quite properly surround the operation of that committee, but certainly what we do know is that there are prima facie matters to be considered by the Ethics Committee. They are not my words; they are the words which were contained in the referring letter by the acting chair of the Parliamentary Crime and Corruption Committee when this matter was first brought to its attention and subsequently referred to the Ethics Committee in Queensland. Given there is a clear indication in that letter to the Ethics Committee that there are prima facie issues to be addressed here, I think it is probably also fair to say—considering there may or may not have been some deliberations within the PCCC—that therefore it should not take that committee that long to address the so-called prima facie issues.

In my time in this parliament I am not really aware of many other, if any, circumstances where matters have been referred to an Ethics Committee with such a precursor indication of prima facie matters. Also, given the fact that this is such a critical portfolio which is held by the member for Bundamba, if this matter can be resolved expeditiously then it will provide an environment which ensures that the cloud of the lack of appropriate political and ministerial leadership that prevails over the Queensland Police Service at the moment—and also the cloud that prevails over the member for Bundamba at this stage—will be lifted.

It was the Premier who said not that long ago outside of this place—and it may also have been inside this place—that in relation to another matter involving the member for Bundamba that was going to be the final matter. Since that time, we have had this serious allegation and it does need to be resolved as quickly as possible.

This motion tonight does not seek to direct the Ethics Committee to make a finding, because it would be improper to do so. This motion simply directs the Ethics Committee to report back to the House by 13 October in relation to this matter. It also directs the Ethics Committee to table in the House the statement in relation to the destruction of documents referred to in a letter which has been the nub of this issue all the way through. Therefore, I think it is absolutely imperative—even though this is an extraordinary motion—that that be considered, because if it is prima facie, which the chair of the committee, who was a government member, indicated at the time, then the committee should be able to resolve it very, very quickly. The concern that the opposition and many other people have is that unless there is some urgency around this then this matter will continue to bleed on and it will continue to hang around the head of the member for Bundamba and public administration potentially for months ahead.



Hon. JA TRAD (South Brisbane—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Minister for Transport, Minister for Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning and Minister for Trade) (6.06 pm): I rise to speak against the motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition. What this motion demonstrates and illustrates beyond any doubt is that, whilst those people opposite say that they are different from the Campbell Newman led LNP government of the last term, their actions today prove they are not. The same arrogance, the same bullying and the same intimidation that existed in the last three years under Campbell Newman and the LNP in this place continues today under the Leader of the Opposition and his deputy and every single one of the LNP members who will vote in favour of this motion tonight.

Let me make it very clear. As a former member of both the Parliamentary Crime and Misconduct Committee and the previous Ethics Committee of this parliament, I understand the very important role and function that both of these committees play in terms of this parliament. Whilst this motion may not be technically out of order, it is ethically and morally wrong and it just goes to show that just because you can do something it does not mean you should. The Ethics Committee is one of the most important committees of this House, determining as it does whether an action by a member or a stranger is a contempt of the rights, privileges and powers of the parliament—the most important and the most powerful institution in this state.

Mr Speaker, as you know, and as I know having sat on the Ethics Committee in the past, some very significant issues have been presented to the Ethics Committee and the Parliamentary Crime and Misconduct Committee about a whole range of issues, but my understanding is that this is the first time the parliament has sought to instruct, as the motion says, the Ethics Committee to fit within a time frame and to table documents. This is the first time that parliamentarians have sought to instruct the Ethics Committee on its work. Let me tell the House why that is wrong. It is wrong because the Ethics Committee is a quasi-judicial committee of this parliament. As such, it must adhere to fundamental legal principles—principles of natural justice which mean that everybody accused who goes before the committee has the right to be told of the allegations before them, has the right to prepare statements of defence and has the right to have due time given to consider the allegations before them to assemble a defence and to report to the committee.

They have those fundamental rights under the principle of natural justice. What those opposite want to do is subvert that very basic fundamental legal principle by which the Ethics Committee operates. That just goes to prove that, whilst they say they might be different from the former LNP Campbell Newman led government, nothing could be further from the truth. Their actions tonight prove that, while they might say one thing, they are no different.

Let me say, Mr Speaker, as you were on the Parliamentary Crime and Misconduct Committee, that we know where this extends to. We know where this behaviour of bullying and being able to instruct a parliamentary committee which has to abide by legal principles in terms of its deliberation ultimately ends. It ultimately ends in those opposite moving a motion in the dead of night to sack a parliamentary committee, as Campbell Newman and the member for Kawana did in the last term in this chamber. They sacked a committee because the committee did not do what the former premier wanted. The committee did not shut its mouth and those opposite retaliated by sacking an entire committee of this parliament in the dead of night.

I will tell those members in this chamber who vote in favour of this disgraceful motion two things. They are proving that they are behaving true to form, true to LNP form, in their bullying and intimidatory ways. They will continue that in this term. Secondly, it just proves that they are prepared to go to ultimate lengths—

(Time expired)

 **Mr WALKER** (Mansfield—LNP) (6.11 pm): I have been in this place now for about 3½ years. There are plenty of times when we hear people speak in this chamber and overplay their hand, but, boy, there has not been such a time as tonight when we have heard such an irrelevant and overstated case. This is what it comes down to. What the Deputy Premier has said—

Ms Trad interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Pause the clock. Deputy Premier, you have had a chance. I would ask you to contain yourself, please.

Mrs Frecklington: Calm down.

Mr SPEAKER: Thank you, member for Nanango. I will use your words; all members can calm down. I call the member for Mansfield.

Mr WALKER: The Deputy Premier has used her brilliant legal incisive mind to come up with this proposition and that is that if we place a time on an inquiry to report within we are interfering with the quasi-judicial nature of that inquiry. Just think about how stupid that is. Every inquiry which is set up by this parliament, be it judicial or quasi-judicial, is given a date to report. It is hardly exceptional; it is quite the norm.

Ms TRAD: Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order.

Mr SPEAKER: Pause the clock. What is your point of order?

Ms TRAD: That statement is not true. The Ethics Committee is not given a period in which to report. That statement is false.

Mr SPEAKER: Deputy Premier, there is no point of order. I call the member for Mansfield.

Ms Trad interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Deputy Premier, please. I call the member for Mansfield.

Mr WALKER: The principle is very clear. There is absolutely nothing improper about setting a time for a committee of inquiry, be it quasi-judicial or not, to report to the body to whom it reports. It is unexceptional and does not fall within the category of the three favourite phrases the Deputy Premier uses: arrogance, intimidation and bullying. It is not that at all. It is simply bringing due process into this situation, and that is important. It is important for a number of reasons.

The Deputy Premier liked to toss around legal principles during her speech in this debate tonight. One of the main legal principles that is well known to those in the legal profession is that there needs to be an end to litigation. That is a principle that means that you cannot just keep inquiring or litigating for ever and ever and not come to a decision. It is important for all sorts of reasons, both for the public interest and for the interest of those who are involved in litigation, that litigation comes to an end at some stage and that there be a decision.

This motion does no more than put forward good management and due process to the situation that we are looking at, and it is important for a number of reasons. You rightly pointed out, Mr Speaker, that nothing that we are debating tonight goes to the actual issue that the committee needs to look at, and I do not want to go there; I do not need to go there at all. What I want to say to this House is that this is good, simple, due process and housekeeping in respect of a very important matter. It is important for a number of reasons because it goes to public confidence in the committee system. The public expect committees of this parliament to do their job and to report within an appropriate time. People get suspicious that references to committees in this place can be used for ulterior motives. It was strange, to say the least, that this referral occurred on the morning of the beginning of estimates. The public has a reasonable cynicism about this and wants to be assured that the committee system is not being used for ulterior purposes and, in fact, it is being used to investigate something and things come to a conclusion. If there is to be public confidence in the committee system, we need to have a time frame around this, a reasonable one, for the committee to report within.

The morale of the Police Service is also involved. It is no doubt disturbing, to say the least, for members of the police force to know that an inquiry without a time limit is happening in respect of the leadership of that part of the Public Service which they serve so well. To allow the committee to go on without restraint causes them uncertainty and disquiet within their ranks that we would not want to foster. We want to make sure that they get a response soon.

Not least in all of this is the minister herself. If she is to perform her role with confidence and with appropriate response and responsibility to the community, it is important for her as well that this matter not drag on for whatever reason and that it is brought to a head within a reasonable time. This motion is not bullying. It is not dominating. It is not unfair. It gives the committee a reasonable time within which to investigate the matters that it has to investigate and to report back to the parliament. To give it that time frame can only be an appropriate thing for the committee, for the minister, for the police force, for this House and, indeed, for the people of Queensland.

 **Mr PEGG** (Stretton—ALP) (6.16 pm): I, too, rise to oppose this motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition. I will respond to the second element of the motion which requests that at the time of its report the Ethics Committee table in the House the statement in relation to the destruction of documents referred to in the letter from the acting chair of the—

Mrs Frecklington interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Pause the clock. Member for Nanango, I really cannot hear what the member is saying. I call the member for Stretton.

Mr PEGG: I will respond to the second element of the motion, which requested that at the time of its report the Ethics Committee table in the House the statement in relation to the destruction of documents referred to in the letter from the acting chair of the PCCC to the Speaker dated 17 August 2015 that was tabled in the House on 18 August 2015. I remind the Leader of the Opposition that such privileged materials are confidential documents belonging to the committee. Indeed, standing order 211A relates to the confidentiality of proceedings of the PCCC and Ethics Committee. Standing order 211A(1) outlines—

The proceedings of the Parliamentary Crime and Corruption Committee and the Ethics Committee or a subcommittee of those committees that is not open to the public or authorised to be published remains strictly confidential to the committee until the committee has reported those proceedings to the House or otherwise published the proceedings.

Furthermore, standing order 211A(2) stipulates—

No member shall in the House refer to any proceedings of a committee in (1), until the committee has reported those proceedings to the House or otherwise published the proceedings.

I see that the member for Southern Downs has been likened to Sam the Eagle from *The Muppets*. Like Sam, may I say his motion today is rather bald. This is just another cheap, tawdry stunt from a cavalier cowboy opposition that would seek to ride roughshod over due process and natural justice.

Honourable members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Pause the clock. Honourable members, the member for Stretton does not have a loud voice and I am having difficulty hearing him. I would urge you to allow him to be heard.

Mr PEGG: As I said, the opposition is only too ready to engage in character assassination over the member for Bundamba. We saw this in estimates when non-government members treated the hearings with disdain, sensationalising the process for political purposes rather than seeking genuine answers to questions.

During the estimates hearings significant periods of time were taken up by non-government members repeatedly asking questions which breached standing orders and which were therefore ruled out of order. Patently this time could have been more fruitfully allocated to the scrutiny of the appropriations bills. In the context of those hearings we saw too that non-government members questioned the actions of the PCCC, implying that a serious offence had been committed by PCCC members. Again the government has said from the outset that if opposition members have concerns that are genuine they should refer these matters to the Speaker. But this would be expecting too much, and from day one the opposition has done nothing but play games with the PCCC.

The Ethics Committee is a creature of the Parliament of Queensland Act. As the Deputy Premier has said, it is a quasi-judicial committee that is empowered to govern its own processes and procedures and determine on its own the best way to afford natural justice and procedural fairness in respect of referrals to it. There is a clear distinction between the statutory committees, which are the Ethics Committee, the Parliamentary Crime and Misconduct Committee and the Committee of the Legislative Assembly, and the portfolio committees, which are the Finance and Administration Committee, the Agriculture and Environment Committee, the Communities, Disability Services and Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Committee, the Education, Tourism and Small Business Committee, the Health and Ambulance Services Committee, the Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources Committee, the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee and the Utilities, Science and Innovation Committee. I have not been in this place for too long, yet I understand that very, very important distinction.

The committee system plays an important role and has a positive impact on parliament and the process of government. The committee system gives citizens a say and takes parliament to the people. This is only fair and just. We should not be attempting to circumscribe the committee's deliberations on this matter. All members of parliament should take the committee process seriously. All members of this House should respect the committee process. It is vitally important that this process is respected and it is vitally important that this process is understood.

 **Mr BLEIJIE** (Kawana—LNP) (6.21 pm): I must say with some trepidation that I am always nervous following the big guns of the Labor government, so I will try my best on this important motion that we are debating tonight. Let us deal with the Deputy Premier's contribution to this debate tonight.

Ms Jones interjected.

Mr BLEIJIE: Are you on the list, education minister? Put yourself on the list.

We heard the Deputy Premier speak about the integrity of the system and report dates. I say to the Deputy Premier, that if she wants to know about report dates, I am quite sure that if she looks back at *Hansard* this week she will see that the Labor government actually referred a matter to the finance committee with a report date. Believe it or not, the Labor Party put a report date for a committee to come back to the House, so I reject the argument from the Deputy Premier—

Mr Springborg: No!

Mr BLEIJIE: Believe it or not, opposition leader! The Deputy Premier was referring to matters which occurred some time ago when she said that the former government came in here and sacked the PCCC because she was on it at the time. Let us just remind the Deputy Premier of exactly what happened on that particular night because the Deputy Premier talks about the principles of natural

justice. The reason that those events took place that night was because the now Deputy Premier was serving on a committee investigating a Queenslander, and she had gone out and tweeted that he was essentially guilty before the committee had handed down its report. So the Deputy Premier cannot come in here and say that this motion is about prejudging an individual who is subject to an ethics investigation, because the Deputy Premier did exactly that in 2013. That is why those events took place that night, so do not try and change history. Do not try and change what happened on that night: let the record show it.

The other thing that I want to speak about is the importance of this motion. Obviously I am not going to talk about the substantive matter before the committee, but there is an important matter where a member of the House has been referred to that committee. I have had concerns for many years, and they are on the public record, that one is under a cloud when they are the subject of an investigation.

Ms Jones interjected.

Mr BLEIJIE: Mr Speaker, the education minister is continually disrupting the proceedings of this House.

Mr SPEAKER: Pause the clock. Thank you, member for Kawana. Member for Ashgrove, your interjection is not being taken. I would urge you to hold your counsel and allow the member for Kawana to make his contribution without interruptions. That reflects on everyone.

Mr BLEIJIE: The motion that we are debating tonight is particularly important for the member who is subjected to the investigation. Without going into the substance of the investigation, it is important to note that the matter we are referring to was in fact referred to the committee not by the opposition but by Labor government members. This is an important matter. As I have stated on the record many times, people who are subjected to these investigations have a cloud hanging over their heads and there should be some certainty to the process.

One matter that is still before the Ethics Committees—and again I will not comment on the subject matter, but suffice to say the individual concerned is Dr Ken Levy—is still the subject of investigation, and I expressed concern about that years ago in terms of the time that these matters take. I have expressed concern about police investigations, and I will in the future express concerns about the member for Pumicestone if his investigation takes a long time. This motion is asking parliament to put a report backdate for the committee for certainty. That is a matter for public certainty and the integrity of the institution and also for the member for Bundamba. It concerns her just as much as anyone else to have the matter finalised. That is why it is important that everyone in the House supports this important motion today.

On many occasions we have heard people in this House talk about the hallmark of our democracy and the integrity of our institutions. The Ethics Committee is a committee of this House and this parliament probably could direct it. But we are not asking for a direction; we are simply asking for a report-back date as a matter of fairness. It does not matter who is referred to any committee of this House; a report-back date should apply to all members of this House. All members of this House should be given the fairness and dignity of having the matter sorted out and not having these clouds of uncertainty hanging over their heads. I would extend that to the member for Bundamba as I would anyone else in this House. It serves the interests of justice, integrity and accountability to have this—

(Time expired)

 **Hon. SJ HINCHLIFFE** (Sandgate—ALP) (6.27 pm): I rise to oppose this extraordinary and unprecedented motion, which is how we heard it described by the Leader of the Opposition. In the first instance I will largely confine myself to addressing the first element of the motion about the delivery of an 'instruction' to the Ethics Committee.

As the member for Southern Downs—having been in this place for a quarter of a century—ought to know, the Ethics Committee is a quasi-judicial body, and seeking to instruct it would debase its independence and the important role it plays in allowing for appropriate natural justice to be experienced by those people before it. Matters of privilege relating to the alleged failure of a member to follow an order of a previous PCCC are very, very serious. It is neither the convention, nor appropriate, for the House to instruct the Ethics Committee to report within a certain time frame.

I would suggest that standing order 271, which relates to such restrictions, notes that a matter referred to the Ethics Committee must not be debated in the House until such time as the committee has reported on the matter. While this is narrowly defined, this motion does open the issue of whether that is seeking to somehow expose and develop some sort of debate or referral of this matter. I think

that is a problem in itself, but ultimately it is important that we allow the committee to have sufficient time to thoroughly investigate the allegations. In doing so, it is the committee's prerogative as to when it reports to the House. It is in the best position to determine the time that it needs and the things that it needs to consider in order to thoroughly investigate the matter. So again, those opposite, listen and learn. Standing order 270 regarding the procedures of the Ethics Committee states that the committee can—

... request any person the subject of complaint in the matter to provide a written explanation of any allegations contained in the complaint; and

- (c) shall, if the person the subject of complaint disputes the allegation:
 - (i) give the person the opportunity to be heard; and
 - (ii) give any persons that the person nominates the opportunity to be heard; and
- (d) may obtain information from such other persons, and make such inquiries, as it thinks fit.

...

- (6) The ethics committee must not, in any report, make a finding that is adverse to any person unless it has given the person:
 - (a) full particulars of the complaint; and
 - (b) the opportunity to be heard in relation to the complaint.

In summary, this is about affording anyone the subject of such inquiries due process and natural justice—all of those members of the House who might at some point be subject to it—and affording the committee sufficient time to carry out its inquiries in a thorough manner, and any person the subject to the complaint sufficient time to respond to any of those allegations.

To that extent, 13 October is patently a ridiculous and unreasonable time frame for the committee to undertake such investigations. As we should know by now, the opposition does not let rules or good processes get in the way of political expediency. The LNP and its predecessor, the National Party, have legion form in undermining and debasing our parliament. They have absolute form in this regard. There are, as we heard, legion examples in the 54th Parliament. Their lack of respect in this motion is therefore unsurprising. Just because you can does not mean you should. As enlightenment philosopher David Hume's naturalistic fallacy puts it, 'that is does not mean ought'.

The member for Mansfield mentioned suspicion. This House can be rightly suspicious about the motivation of this motion; that it is not, as suggested by the member for Mansfield, the good order and management of this House's committees but base political expediency. They have form in the last parliament. We see it again in moving this motion. I urge the House to oppose this extraordinary motion.

Division: Question put—That the motion be agreed to.

AYES, 41:

LNP, 41—Barton, Bates, Bennett, Bleijie, Boothman, Costigan, Cramp, Crandon, Cripps, Davis, Dickson, Elmes, Emerson, Frecklington, Krause, Langbroek, Last, Leahy, Mander, McArdle, McEachan, McVeigh, Millar, Minnikin, Molhoek, Nicholls, Perrett, Powell, Rickuss, Robinson, Rowan, Seeney, Simpson, Smith, Sorensen, Springborg, Stevens, Stuckey, Walker, Watts, Weir.

NOES, 43:

ALP, 42—Bailey, Boyd, Brown, Butcher, Byrne, Crawford, D'Ath, de Brenni, Dick, Donaldson, Enoch, Farmer, Fentiman, Furner, Gilbert, Grace, Harper, Hinchliffe, Howard, Jones, Kelly, King, Lauga, Linard, Lynham, Madden, Miles, Miller, O'Rourke, Palaszczuk, Pearce, Pease, Pegg, Pitt, Power, Russo, Ryan, Saunders, Stewart, Trad, Whiting, Williams.

INDEPENDENT, 1—Gordon.

Pairs: Pyne, Hart.

Resolved in the negative.

Sitting suspended from 6.37 pm to 7.40 pm.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Further Answer to Question; Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services

 **Hon. JR MILLER** (Bundamba—ALP) (Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services and Minister for Corrective Services) (7.40 pm), by leave: I wish to clarify my earlier response in relation to any meetings with officials of the CFMEU. Following a check of my diary, I can advise that I met with some Blackwater mining families in my office on 27 August and a representative from the CFMEU mining division was also in attendance at that time. I will also be attending a Miners Memorial Day in

Mount Morgan this Saturday. This annual event commemorates those miners who have lost their lives in over a century of mining in Queensland. The miners union—the CFMEU Mining and Energy Division—will be there.

PROCLAMATION MADE UNDER THE WATER REFORM AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT ACT

Disallowance of Statutory Instrument



Mr CRIPPS (Hinchinbrook—LNP) (7.41 pm): I move—

That the proclamation made under the Water Reform and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2014, subordinate legislation No. 2 of 2015, tabled in the House on 26 March 2015, be disallowed.

I have moved this disallowance motion because I am determined to take every opportunity to fight for the much needed reforms to the Water Act that were agreed to by this parliament in November last year but were blocked by the Palaszczuk government with an executive order in February of this year. To give the House an understanding of what has occurred in this space in the lead-up to this disallowance motion, I will briefly provide a chronology of events to date.

The Water Reform and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2014 was passed by this House with amendments on 26 November last year and received assent on 5 December last year. Certain, although relatively minor, provisions of that bill commenced on assent and certain other provisions commenced on 19 December last year. These pertain to changes to the River Improvement Trust Act and amendments to the Burnett Basin water resource plan. The remainder of the substantial provisions of this bill were due to commence on 18 February this year. Regrettably, a proclamation by the Palaszczuk government on 17 February 2015 intervened to prevent their commencement except for some amendments that allowed for more flexible administrative and reporting requirements for the operation of category 2 water authorities.

Recently, on 11 September, the Palaszczuk government allowed some further provisions to commence, including amendments to the Great Artesian Basin water resource plan, the publication of a new watercourse identification map for the state of Queensland, the removal of the reversal of the onus of proof from the Water Act, the removal of regulations pertaining to drainage and embankment areas, and changes to improve the process for the publication of public notices pertaining to the Water Act. Notwithstanding the commencement of a number of provisions from the bill on 5 December and 19 December 2014 and 18 February and 11 September this year, the core substantial and more comprehensive reforms of the 2014 bill remain trapped behind the Palaszczuk government's democratically illegitimate executive order of 17 February 2015.

On 3 June this year I moved a motion in this House which sought to direct the Palaszczuk government to put the necessary documentation before the governor-in-council to ensure the parts of the Water Reform and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2014 which had not commenced at that date did so as soon as practicable. That motion failed by virtue of the fact that the Speaker used his casting vote. However, I note that two MPs failed to vote in the division on that motion. For that reason, it is my view that an accurate reflection of the views of this House when fully assembled was not recorded on 3 June this year and for that reason I have resolved to move this disallowance motion tonight.

The arguments I advanced in support of that motion on 3 June this year were threefold, and they have not fundamentally changed. Firstly, I argued that Queensland needed these reforms to the Water Act. The Water Act 2000 has not been substantially updated since it was enacted. The former LNP government introduced the water reform bill to modernise the primary framework for the planning, allocation and management of water in Queensland. The 2014 amendment bill sought to ensure Queensland's water legislation kept pace with current water management best practice and technology and to ensure the state's water resources were used responsibly and productively while retaining certainty and security of water entitlements and balancing economic, social and environmental outcomes.

The changes were designed to deliver an efficient, effective and modern water resource framework and were a significant part of the former LNP government's commitment to grow the agriculture and resources sectors to create economic development opportunities, particularly for rural and regional Queensland. Queensland does need these reforms. Key areas of reform in the 2014 bill that Queensland water users have been denied access to since February include a new overarching purpose for the Water Act; a streamlined framework for water resource planning; the ability to fast-track

the conversion of water licences to tradeable allocations; a more streamlined water licence application process and more flexible approaches to management of low-impact take of water; increased access to water through expanded water markets and unallocated water; providing for water rights under special agreement legislation to be managed under the Water Act; managing the impacts of resources sector activities on underground water resources to provide more certainty for landowners; and providing a consistent framework for the operation of the resources sector involving groundwater resources.

An interesting fact is that the Water Act currently includes a purpose for chapter 2 of the act only. The new overarching purpose proposed by the 2014 bill sets a new direction for water resource management in Queensland. Contrary to some of the scaremongering and misinformation being circulated by the Palaszczuk government, green groups and others with vested interests, the proposed new purpose seeks to recognise the need to balance social, economic and environmental values and that water is a key driver of economic development in Queensland. Importantly, the new purpose would continue to recognise the importance of sustaining ecosystem health, water quality, water dependent ecological processes and biological diversity associated with catchments, watercourses, lakes, springs, aquifers and other natural systems.

Also contrary to some of the deliberate misinformation and disgraceful scaremongering by the Palaszczuk government, green groups and others with vested interests is the positive outcomes these reforms will have in respect of the management of water in Queensland's resources sector. Water users and landowners can be confident that, under these proposed reforms, before a mine starts to take underground water near or on a property the project proponent will be required by law to undertake an assessment of impacts. This will then lead to a requirement for the company to enter into make-good agreements with bore owners whose bores are likely to be impaired due to mining activities. A make-good agreement allows the bore owner and the mining company to agree on make-good measures for the bore. For water users and landowners interacting with the proponents of a coal or hard-rock mining project, this would mean access to a statutory protection and statutory responsibility to make good, and they have never had access to that before.

In respect of the petroleum and gas industry, these reforms would provide more certainty for landowners holding water licences and allocations by placing some limits on an operator's right to take underground water for the first time. Currently, companies have the right to take underground water for any purpose as part of their operations provided their make-good arrangements were in place with bore owners. Under these proposed reforms these companies will have the right to take underground water only where it is unavoidable, for example, to depressurise coal seams to extract gas. For the first time, companies will be required to have a licence or permit to take any other non-associated water for use in their operations.

Similarly, coal and hard-rock mining projects would have the same right as petroleum and gas projects to take underground water where it is unavoidable as part of their operations, for example, in dewatering a coal seam in order to access the mineral resource. However, under these reforms they would continue to require a licence or permit to take any other water for use in their operations.

The great benefit of these reforms in respect of the resources sector is the consistency that would be achieved across both the mining and the petroleum and gas sectors in Queensland. Both sectors will operate under a single consistent framework for the management of underground water. The new framework would give industry and landowners more certainty.

The second reason for these reforms and the reason they should be supported is to provide greater certainty of access to volumes of water for new irrigated agriculture proposals. There is a pressing need for the provision establishing the water development option to be enacted to encourage investment, particularly in regional and rural Queensland and, even more particularly, in North Queensland for irrigated agriculture projects. The water development option would allow volumes of water to be granted to proponents of new irrigated agriculture projects if and when proponents successfully completed a full environmental impact assessment process to determine the sustainability of those allocations. I will say that again. The water development option would allow volumes of water to be granted to proponents of new irrigated agriculture projects if and when they successfully completed a full environmental impact assessment process to determine the sustainability of those allocations. That is really important to know.

At the moment, in terms of water resources the lack of an available pathway for a new agriculture project is a real concern, given the current focus on northern development coming from the federal coalition government and the number of potential projects that could go ahead, investment that could be secured and jobs that could be created if there were some regulatory certainty for proponents. These

reforms would reduce red tape and provide the private sector with a clear, consistent and transparent pathway for the assessment and approval of major water infrastructure projects. In other words, it would clear away some of the significant barriers that exist in Queensland for the establishment of new dams—something that is well overdue in this state.

Under the current legislation, when a private sector proponent proposes the development of a new project they are faced with a complex approvals process requiring significant financial and resource investments with very little certainty or market confidence that projects will get over the line. The reforms that I prepared, which have been blocked by the Palaszczuk government, would deliver an integrated process for approvals under the Water Act 2000 and the environmental impact assessment process for major water infrastructure projects declared to be coordinated projects under the State Development and Public Works Organisation Act 1971. There is a real threat that, because the Palaszczuk government is beholden to the green groups, Queensland, and especially North Queensland, may miss out on opportunities that we have been waiting for for generations to take advantage of the natural resources that are required for a project in our area of Queensland.

There are no excuses for the Palaszczuk government to oppose this disallowance motion on the basis of this water development option. A water development option based on an EIS is basically the same process that has been proposed by the current IFED process in the Gilbert catchment and the current EIS process for the three rivers project in the Flinders catchment, except that it would bring it within the capacity of the Water Act and bring it inside the legislation instead of standing alone.

The third matter that was canvassed during the debate on the motion on 3 June this year was the House expressing its opinion that law passed by the parliament should be enacted and any amendment to that law should be made only by further amending legislation and not by the use of executive powers. The use by the Minister for State Development and Minister for Natural Resources and Mines of a proclamation on 17 February this year to countermand a proclamation from 18 December last year is very clearly an abuse of executive power that should be considered by this House to be an alarming contempt of parliament. Using an executive order to countermand another executive order which sought to implement the express will of this parliament strikes me as being even more offensive to the principle of the rule of law than the widely criticised use of Henry VIII clauses—that is, the amendment of primary legislation by the use of subordinate legislation. At least in the case of subordinate legislation such instruments have to be tabled in the House before they take effect. The minister and the government have absolutely no direction from this House that entitle them to use executive power to prevent the provisions of the water reform bill, which was passed by this parliament in November last year, from becoming law.

As I have said before, if the minister and the government do not support these provisions, they should have the intestinal fortitude to bring an amendment bill to this House and argue the merits of their alternative proposals or the merits of the provisions that the status quo legislation proposes to amend. Instead they are cowering behind an executive order.

The proclamation of 17 February this year was not supported by an expression of the will of this House. It is undoubtedly an abuse of executive power and a contempt of the parliament. I think that should be enough for all members to support this motion tonight. Regional and rural Queensland, especially North Queensland, deserve an opportunity to have a go in terms of new economic development opportunities, and the water development option in these reforms would give them that opportunity. For all of those reasons, I urge all members of this House to support this motion to disallow the proclamation of 17 February this year.

 **Mr STEWART** (Townsville—ALP) (7.56 pm): I rise to speak against this disallowance motion moved by the member for Hinchinbrook. As the member for Townsville in North Queensland, I am all too aware of how vital it is to secure and protect Queensland's precious water resources. My electorate is bordered by the treasure that is the Great Barrier Reef, which contributes so much to the state's natural beauty and the state's tourism industry. My electorate is also surrounded by the agricultural centres of North Queensland which are indispensable to the Queensland economy. However, both require the ongoing sustainable management of Queensland's water resources. Additionally, the state is looking down the barrel of a drought that is affecting families and impacting on communities. With 80 per cent of the state currently drought declared, we cannot afford to take risks with our water resources. It is for those reasons that I am most concerned about the former government's Water Reform and Other Legislation Amendment Bill and why all members should vote against this disallowance motion.

During the parliamentary committee process and the parliamentary debate, the government, then in opposition, raised concerns about particular provisions of the WROLA Bill. These concerns were not just those of the Labor Party but also those of a wide range of stakeholders, including landholders and

the agricultural, mining and conservation sectors. Those concerns were consistently raised and consistently ignored by the former LNP government. As the Minister for Natural Resources and Mines pointed out on 3 June, when a motion was previously moved by those opposite on this matter, aspects of these laws were of concern to those groups.

I am very concerned about the removal of important principles of ecological sustainable development from the purpose of the Water Act. I cannot support removing those important principles. Those principles ensure appropriate consideration and balance between economic, environmental, social and equitable considerations. They ensure that water systems are enhanced for future generations and these principles ensure the ongoing biological diversity and ecological integrity of all systems depending on Queensland's water supplies. No amount of window-dressing can hide the fact that the replacement definitions seriously undermine the act and remove essential and environmental sustainability protections.

Additionally, I cannot, and members should not, support the provisions of the water development option. These provisions allow commitments to water to be made to major water infrastructure projects without appropriate consultation and outside the water planning process. Queensland has a comprehensive and rigorous water planning process undertaken by the Department of Natural Resources and Mines. Each water resource plan is periodically reviewed, using best available science to determine an appropriate balance between environmental flows and consumptive use.

Decisions regarding consumptive use for irrigation should take place in the water planning framework, not through the environmental impact statement. I am also extremely concerned that consultation is deferred until after the grant of a water development option. For such a significant undertaking I would have hoped that consultation with potentially affected stakeholders and interested parties would be guaranteed in legislation. Instead, we find that it is deferred to a later EIS process outside of the water planning framework. I share the concerns of many stakeholders with this framework and I cannot support it.

All Queenslanders should be concerned about the risk of overallocating water resources and impacts on the Great Barrier Reef. The water development options and the watercourse provisions that allow watercourses to be deregulated seriously increase these risks. I would have hoped that the LNP government would have had time to reflect on their experiences with the WROLA Bill and come to this House with new policies, new frameworks and new proposals. Instead, here we are discussing the same issues that got those opposite in trouble last year and led to the stinging rebuke on 31 January.

The government, when in opposition, delivered a dissenting report in the Agriculture, Resources and Environmental Committee's report on the WROLA Bill. Despite this opposition and the support of many members of the wider community on our stance, the WROLA Bill was passed and the majority of provisions were proclaimed to commence on 18 February 2015, excluding the groundwater reforms for the resource sectors.

On taking office, one of the government's first actions was to bring forward the amendment proclamation to prevent these questionable water reforms from commencing. This was an important action to meet our commitments to Queenslanders, commitments that the Palaszczuk government takes seriously, unlike those opposite. This proclamation amendment allows the government to properly consider these provisions in the WROLA Act and ensure they align with our policy commitments to Queenslanders before they are allowed to commence. The government has been taking action and I know that my colleague, the Minister for Natural Resources and Mines, has been making substantial progress in reviewing the WROLA Act with the commencement of some beneficial provisions only last week. These include the watercourse identification map and new processes for the release of unallocated water.

The minister has also advised of his intention to bring forward a bill soon to address the government's remaining concerns with the provisions of the WROLA Act. This provides those opposite, and indeed the entire House, the opportunity to scrutinise and contribute to the bill. I know that my colleagues on the Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources Committee will undertake a thorough and comprehensive examination of proposed changes, taking on feedback from the wider community.

I also noted that the Minister for Natural Resources and Mines has been extremely active on water issues. Not only has he reviewed and commenced the aforementioned components of the act, he has also been working to deliver sustainable water resource development that will benefit the state. For example, the minister has been working diligently to recently deliver the finalisation of amendments to the Gulf Water Resource Plan. I know that this will be a significant boost to the far north. The minister has also initiated the water planning process to deliver increased opportunities in the Burdekin Basin up my way.

This is a government that takes the sustainable management of water in this state extremely seriously, as have all Labor governments in this state. This is unlike those opposite. The member for Hinchinbrook, in moving this motion to disallow the amending proclamation, stands to impede the legitimate mandate of the government to meet its commitments to Queenslanders. What is more, the member for Hinchinbrook is moving a motion advocating for the commencement of provisions that are quite troublesome and place at risk Queensland's precious water resources. For these reasons the disallowance should not be supported and I will be voting against this disallowance motion.

 **Mrs FRECKLINGTON** (Nanango—LNP) (8.03 pm): It gives me pleasure to rise to speak in support of the disallowance motion brought before the House by the member for Hinchinbrook and shadow minister for natural resources and mines in relation to the Water Reform and Other Legislation Amendment Act. The Water Reform and Other Legislation Amendment Bill was agreed to by the Queensland parliament on 26 November 2014. However, unfortunately, in usual Labor style, one of the first actions of this government was to block the commencement of this very important act. Tonight I want to support the overturning of this proclamation and allow the provisions of the Water Reform and Other Legislation Amendment Act to come into force.

There is a reason it is so important that I stand up and defend this act. One of the main reasons the former LNP government introduced the water reform bill was to modernise the primary framework for planning, allocation and management of water in Queensland—in short, to increase the productivity of agricultural lands. It was a commitment to help grow the agriculture and resources sectors and create economic development opportunities for rural and regional Queensland in particular. As I said when we last discussed this legislation, it is essential for the future of agriculture to work with regional producers and landholders to ensure that we are enablers and do not stand in the way of the state's vital agriculture industry.

Unfortunately there is much misinformation in relation to the bill and the proposed laws around the taking of water by the resource sector. I would like to clarify that irrigators and landholders can be confident under these reforms that, before a mine starts to take underground water near their property, the mining company quite clearly would be required by law to undertake an assessment of those impacts. For the first time ever, this will then lead to a requirement for the company to enter into a make-good agreement with bore owners. Anyone speaking against this motion is speaking against the establishment of make-good agreements. It also limits the rights of petroleum and gas companies to take the underground water where previously they had a right to take whatever water they wanted for the purpose of their operations.

Those couple of short points illustrate the misinformation that is being spread around by the Labor Party. It is extremely disappointing. We need to enable this legislation. We need to stop the procrastination around this legislation because it is that procrastination that is stifling this state.

 **Mr RICKUSS** (Lockyer—LNP) (8.06 pm): I agree with what the member for Nanango has just said. The make-good arrangements that have been put in place under this legislation were a major change and are good legislation. Reducing some of the red tape has also been extremely beneficial to the community. We are procrastinating on this for no reason.

Unfortunately, most of the members on the other side, along with most of the green groups, do not understand the legislation. I chaired the committee that looked into this and there was support for the make-good arrangements, the red-tape reduction and various other parts of the legislation. To have this overturned by executive government is a blight on our democracy. It is extremely disappointing. I am sure that if the minister fully comprehended what was being talked about here he would realise that the make-good arrangements in the legislation are extremely important to the community.

I fully support the member for Hinchinbrook's stand on the make-good arrangements and on the reduction of red tape. I have had water licences. I have been on water committees—I used to be the only one on the water committee up home not getting paid. I understand water issues. Some of this legislation was extremely good. The make-good arrangements for the hard-rock mining in particular were very important. It had been in the gas industry but for some reason we had left it out of coal and other mining industries.

This was an important part of the legislation that unfortunately has been stopped by an executive decision which really is an abuse of executive power. I understand the frustration that the member for Hinchinbrook is feeling about this. I fully support the disallowance motion. The government needs to have a good, hard look at itself on this issue and explain to the community why it is doing this.

 **Hon. AJ LYNHAM** (Stafford—ALP) (Minister for State Development and Minister for Natural Resources and Mines) (8.09 pm): I rise to inform the House that the government does not support the disallowance motion moved by the member for Hinchinbrook. On 17 February 2015, the governor-in-

council approved a proclamation amending the previous proclamation, the Water Reform and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2014, which is subordinate legislation. The member for Hinchinbrook is seeking a disallowance of the proclamation amendment. Previously the member for Hinchinbrook has tried to nullify delayed commencement of the WROLA Act provisions by putting a motion to parliament on 3 June 2015 that '... law passed by the parliament should be enacted and any amendment to that law only be by further amending legislation and not by the use of executive powers'. The expression of the will of this House on 3 June 2015 was a vote against that motion. Despite this, the member opposite has returned for another attempt. I will give him his due: he is very persistent, much like our present Prime Minister. As a man of caution, I would ask you, Mr Speaker, if I should prepare another speech for another go, or will this be it?

The member for Hinchinbrook has been driven by politics rather than policy in the way that he has approached water development in Queensland and I believe that the people of Queensland deserve better. Indeed, in estimates he said that as minister he had intended to release the unallocated water in the Gilbert catchment, despite the Etheridge Integrated Agricultural Project currently preparing its environmental impact statement and the LNP government having signed a protocol in relation to future access to water in this project. I am extremely concerned that, on the one hand, the member is talking about the need for IFED to have regulatory certainty yet, on the other hand, he proposes taking from IFED the very water it needs to succeed.

The member for Hinchinbrook has a bob on every runner in the race. Previously he has criticised the Palaszczuk government for halting development in North Queensland by scuttling the IFED project, despite ongoing negotiations to deliver a positive pathway forward that was in the best interests of Queensland and, indeed, the best interests of North Queensland. After he was left with egg on his face when we publicly released a new memorandum of understanding, he took the next deviation off the track, calling for water to be released in the Gilbert catchment. Does the member for Hinchinbrook want us to throw IFED under a bus, as he planned to do by releasing water that it might require for its project? I am extremely disappointed that the member for Hinchinbrook has backflipped and is now advocating a position that could halt development in North Queensland and scuttle the IFED project.

Unlike those opposite, the Palaszczuk government is committed to delivering development and economic growth opportunities in the north. This project could deliver more than 1,700 construction jobs and 1,000 ongoing operational jobs. Those are important jobs that would greatly assist Georgetown and North Queensland. The government will not jeopardise this project by putting at risk the water security it requires as it proceeds through our stronger public MOU process.

I turn to the motion moved in parliament today which in effect seeks the same outcome as the previous motion—that is, to commence the uncommenced provisions of the act, only this time by a disallowance motion. The proclamation amendment defers the commencement of provisions in the Water Reform and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2014 made under the LNP government that were due to commence on 18 February 2015. Upon taking office as the Minister for Natural Resources and Mines I took this necessary step to deliver on the Palaszczuk government's election commitment to act immediately to prevent the commencement of the Newman government's water laws, which will have a detrimental effect on the Great Barrier Reef catchment systems. In opposition, Labor strongly opposed those laws during the debate in parliament last year on the Water Reform and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. During the parliamentary committee stage of the bill, it was very clear that there were strong concerns about the changes to the purposes of the Water Act to remove ecologically sustainable development.

I have also made it quite clear that the use of the term 'responsible and productive management' is not supported. The term does not reflect the principles of ecologically sustainable development or the sustainable management of water resources. We did not support it in opposition and we do not support it in government. It is a shame, as last year the former government had the opportunity to incorporate the principles of ecologically sustainable development into the purpose clause. This opportunity was missed and it has been left to the Palaszczuk government to rectify. When the LNP removed the requirement to ensure that the health, diversity and productivity of the environment is maintained or enhanced for the benefit of future generations, it removed a fundamental element of the Water Act. The status quo should not be used as the base line for what is determined to be the ongoing health of water supplies in this state. We should always be striving to enhance the health of our watercourses where possible.

As a fundamental principle, the Palaszczuk government does not just accept the status quo; we strive for better outcomes and that is a principle that we apply widely. As an extension of this, the removal of the principle that lack of scientific certainty should not be used as a basis for an action to

prevent environmental degradation is strongly opposed. We also have strong concerns about water development options being able to be granted to proponents outside of a planning process and without appropriate community consultation, transparency and independent science.

As I have previously outlined, but repeat for the benefit of the House, we share the concerns of AgForce, which stated—

Unless it contains a specific and clearly delineated section dealing with the same considerations as required under a water plan consultation, including the impacts on other water users and the environment, AgForce does not view the EIS process to be equivalent consultation to that undertaken under a water plan process.

Mr Cripps: It is in there.

Dr LYNHAM: That is AgForce—their very own. They say that they support the agricultural community, but here they are. Stakeholders have also expressed concern about provisions for declaring designated watercourses. Once declared, a watercourse would no longer require licences for the take of water. Concerns have been raised that the safeguards around this provision are not as strong as other low-risk activities and there is no demonstrable need for the inclusion of the Water Act.

Water is of the utmost importance to the future economic prosperity and environmental health of the state. Farmers require water security to ensure that they can continue to plan for next year's crop and harvest today's. The health of our state's river systems, springs and aquifers all support the many natural wonders that make Queensland one of the most beautiful destinations in the world. Balancing the needs of existing users, the future growth of our state and the ongoing protection of Queensland's environmental beauty requires careful ongoing consideration.

It is becoming quite clear that the needs of farmers, the Great Barrier Reef and the environment as a whole will never be looked after by an LNP government when it comes to water policy. The LNP was playing dice with our state's precious water supplies, our state's environment and our state's ongoing economic prosperity, just as it did with Queensland's last free-flowing rivers and as it continues to do with UNESCO's listing for the Great Barrier Reef. However, in this state Labor has a long and proud legacy of sustainable water planning and management. The proclamation amendment affords the Palaszczuk government time to properly consider aligning the uncommenced provisions of the WROLA Act with government policy to ensure the ongoing sustainable management of water in this state.

If I did not take this action, the government would not be delivering on its election commitments and would be derelict in its responsibilities to Queensland voters, which is something those opposite are all too familiar with. The Queensland government is well within the law and processes of parliament to make a proclamation amendment in order to review the WROLA Act to ensure it is consistent with the government's position and community expectations. The proclamation amendment does not amend the primary legislation. Any amendments to the primary legislation to align the act with government policy will be scrutinised by this House through the introduction of a bill and the subsequent important parliamentary committee process.

The government is making progress in its review of the WROLA Act provisions for alignment with government policy. Some provisions commenced as scheduled on 18 February 2015, including provisions that provide more flexibility for category 2 water authorities to operate more efficiently and autonomously, such as facilitating the transition of water authorities to alternative institutional arrangements.

Additionally, a suite of other provisions commenced just last week. These are relatively operational in nature and have been determined, after review, to not conflict with government policy. In particular, provisions have commenced to allow for more flexibility in the process for releasing and accessing unallocated water. There will be new methods of releasing unallocated water, including a fixed price sale which could occur in areas of low demand or for unallocated water volumes that remain unsold after a competitive release process.

Another option to grant unallocated water will be for a particular purpose, such as town water supplies. Provisions have also commenced to allow for the publication of a watercourse identification map which will provide a user-friendly, consistent and statewide mechanism for spatially recording the extent of watercourses, drainage features, lakes and springs.

The map provides certainty and clarity for landowners regarding the extent of determined watercourses, drainage features, lakes and springs on their land. Further information on these and other provisions that have been commenced will be available on the Department of Natural Resources and Mines website.

I intend, as soon as possible, to bring forward a bill to this House that addresses the government's remaining concerns with the WROLA Act, in particular provisions relating to the water development option and the removal of ecologically sustainable development from the Water Act. My department has involved the water engagement forum in the review of the WROLA Act. Since this government was formed, the membership of the forum has been expanded to actually include conservation sector representatives to ensure stronger, across-sector representation of interests.

I find it quite surprising that such an important forum that meets to discuss and consider significant water amendments has not previously had representatives from the conservation sector. Consultation should involve representatives from all sectors, not just those who are convenient for the government of the day. Consultation should also not involve predetermined outcomes. The water engagement forum will be given the opportunity in the near future to comment on a draft bill before it is introduced to this House.

Through consideration of a bill, the community and parliament will have the opportunity to scrutinise the government's bill. Unlike last time, there will be real opportunity for all interested parties to consider and contribute to the bill. As we are all well aware, many stakeholders were concerned about the consultation process the Newman government undertook when it came to not just water reform but many changes that were of significant concern to the people of Queensland. Indeed, I will quote again the Queensland Resources Council. It stated—

It is difficult to reconcile the caution of stakeholders with the pace at which reforms to the Water Act are being developed ... all water users have been accustomed to deep and on-going consultation at a catchment level; which has simply not been possible in the time allowed for the development of this Bill.

I recall that this bill had the magnificent outcome of bringing together the agricultural community, the mining community, community groups and conservation groups as one in objecting to it. I look forward to providing the Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources Committee the opportunity to examine our bill in depth. I also look forward to the contributions from all interested parties and to reviewing and considering the committee's report.

I would also like to report on other recent achievements in the allocation and management of the state's water resources. The Palaszczuk government has recently finalised amendments to the gulf water resource plan to deliver new volumes of unallocated water in the Flinders and Gilbert river catchments to support agricultural development. My department is meeting with stakeholders in the Flinders River catchment of the gulf about the proposed release of general reserve unallocated water specified in the gulf water resource plan as well as the general reserve in the Great Artesian Basin water resource plan.

My department is also commencing a process to grant a volume of unallocated water from the Indigenous reserve in the Flinders River catchment area to the Morr Morr Pastoral Company to fulfil the company's aspirations for irrigation development that will provide new social and economic opportunities for Indigenous people. Working with the Charters Towers Regional Council and the member for Dalrymple, I have also started a water planning process in the upper catchments of the Burdekin basin that aims to facilitate water trading in the Charters Towers area to help boost agricultural production, which is of significant interest to the region.

I strongly encourage all interested parties to participate and make a submission on the statement of proposals by close of business Monday, 12 October 2015. I have also released a statement of proposals that seeks the community's input into the preparation of a new plan for the Great Artesian Basin. The new plan will support the economic growth of regional Queensland while ensuring the continuation of groundwater flows to natural ecosystems and existing water users who depend on water from the Queensland Great Artesian Basin. Submissions close on 20 November. I again encourage interested members of the public to make their views known.

These recent achievements show that the proclamation amendment and the review of the WROLA Act is not hindering the government from getting on with achieving good outcomes for water allocation and resource management in Queensland. The government is being systematic, pragmatic and considered in working through the alignment of the WROLA Act with government policy as thoroughly as possible.

The government will ensure that water management in Queensland is sustainable, supported by robust science, consultation and transparency in decision-making. I ask that honourable members give the government the opportunity to continue with delivering its alignment strategy by defeating the disallowance motion moved by the member for Hinchinbrook.

Division: Question put—That the motion be agreed to.

AYES, 42:

LNP, 40—Barton, Bates, Bennett, Bleijie, Boothman, Costigan, Cramp, Crandon, Cripps, Davis, Dickson, Elmes, Emerson, Frecklington, Krause, Langbroek, Last, Leahy, Mander, McArdle, McEachan, McVeigh, Millar, Minnikin, Molhoek, Nicholls, Perrett, Powell, Rickuss, Robinson, Rowan, Seeney, Simpson, Smith, Sorensen, Springborg, Stevens, Stuckey, Watts, Weir.

KAP, 2—Katter, Knuth.

NOES, 42:

ALP, 41—Bailey, Boyd, Brown, Butcher, Byrne, Crawford, D'Ath, de Brenni, Dick, Donaldson, Enoch, Farmer, Fentiman, Furner, Gilbert, Grace, Hinchliffe, Howard, Jones, Kelly, King, Lauga, Linard, Lynham, Madden, Miles, Miller, O'Rourke, Palaszczuk, Pearce, Pease, Pegg, Pitt, Power, Russo, Ryan, Saunders, Stewart, Trad, Whiting, Williams.

INDEPENDENT, 1—Gordon.

Pairs: Harper, Walker; Pyne, Hart.

The numbers being equal, Mr Speaker cast his vote with the noes.

Resolved in the negative.

WORKERS' COMPENSATION AND REHABILITATION AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

WORKERS' COMPENSATION AND REHABILITATION (PROTECTING FIREFIGHTERS) AMENDMENT BILL

Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill resumed from 15 July (see p. 1349) and Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation (Protecting Firefighters) Amendment Bill resumed from 3 June (see p. 1032).

Second Reading (Cognate Debate)

Mr SPEAKER: I am pleased to inform members that we have students from the Brisbane Bayside State College from the electorate of Lytton in the public gallery.

 **Hon. CW PITT** (Mulgrave—ALP) (Treasurer, Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships) (8.33 pm): I move—

That the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill be now read a second time.

The Palaszczuk Labor government continues to deliver the promises we made to Queenslanders. We said we would build and rebuild Queensland's workers compensation scheme to be the best in Australia, including restoring the rights of injured workers to access their legal rights. With this bill, the Palaszczuk Labor government delivers on another election commitment. We are committed to restoring fairness and balance to Queensland's workers compensation scheme. However, the bill is more than just an election commitment.

This is a bill about addressing the harsh and unfair amendments made by the former LNP government that introduced a greater than five per cent threshold to access common law and restricted the rights of many Queenslanders to seek damages against a negligent employer. This bill restores the rights of injured workers to seek common law damages for injuries occurring on or after 31 January 2015, the date of the Queensland state election, irrespective of their degree of permanent impairment. This restriction on the rights of everyday Queenslanders was unfair, unjustified and unnecessary, and the Palaszczuk Labor government has made it a priority to restore fairness and balance to Queensland's workers compensation scheme.

Under the LNP's former government, the parliament's Finance and Administration Committee conducted a 12-month inquiry into the operation of Queensland's workers compensation scheme. This LNP dominated committee recognised that imposing a threshold on access to common law damages would improperly remove rights from one group of citizens that are available to other citizens. The committee also considered that a common law threshold should not be imposed as the extent of amendments made in 2010 by the then Labor government had yet to be fully realised. Even now I want to thank all of the members of that committee for the solid work that they did and recommending that the scheme was working well—in fact, that it be strengthened.

The 2010 reforms to the workers compensation scheme have successfully addressed what was then an increasing cost of common law claims and claim numbers when compared to statutory claim numbers within the scheme. In the period 2009 to 2014, the scheme experienced a 15 per cent reduction in the number of common law claims lodged. In addition, the average annual cost of common law damages claims has reduced by 10 per cent. Over the same period, there has been an 11 per cent reduction in the number of new statutory claims and a 17 per cent reduction in the incidents of serious work related injuries requiring more than five days off work. This has resulted in significant savings for the scheme and, as a result, Queensland's workers compensation scheme continues to perform strongly.

The improved performance of the scheme following the 2010 reforms highlighted the fact that the 2013 amendments introducing the threshold were unjustified and unnecessary. Queensland has the lowest average premium rate of any state in Australia of \$1.20 per \$100 of wages paid in 2015-16. Modelling by WorkCover's actuary PricewaterhouseCoopers over the five years to 2019-20 demonstrates that, based on current scheme trends, the removal of the common law threshold can be achieved without impacting on the average premium rate of \$1.20 given WorkCover's substantial reserves that have been accumulated since 2010.

As I outlined in my speech when introducing the bill into the parliament, there has been a significant focus on consultation in implementing the government's policy objectives. A stakeholder reference group comprising representatives of employer associations, trade unions, legal representatives, WorkCover Queensland and self-insurers advised the government on the transfer to the new arrangements, taking account of the rights of injured workers and the timing of workers compensation payments. I would like to take the opportunity to thank the representatives of the stakeholder reference group, being the Australian Industry Group, the Chamber of Commerce & Industry Queensland, the Housing Industry Association, WorkCover, the Association of Self Insured Employers of Queensland, the Australian Workers Union, the Queensland Council of Unions, the Queensland Nurses' Union, the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union, the Bar Association, the Australian Lawyers Alliance and the Queensland Law Society.

In considering the reinstatement of common law rights, the majority of stakeholder reference group members raised concerns that restoring access to common law from 31 January 2015 still leaves a group of workers adversely affected and impacted by the operation of the threshold. To address this unfairness, the bill provides for an additional lump sum compensation to workers injured after 15 October 2013 but before 31 January 2015 who have a degree of permanent impairment assessment below six per cent and an open claim. The provisions in this bill will be supported by regulation, and I table the draft regulation for consideration of members to assist in the debate.

Tabled paper: Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation Amendment Regulation (No. ...) 2015, Tabling Draft [\[1102\]](#).

The draft regulation provides that this additional lump sum compensation is available to workers where they can demonstrate on the balance of probabilities that the worker's employer would have had a liability for common law damages but for the operation of the threshold. Where eligible, a worker will be entitled to an additional payment based on their degree of permanent impairment equivalent to twice their lump sum entitlement. For example, an eligible worker with a one per cent permanent impairment will be entitled to a lump sum compensation of \$3,149 plus additional lump sum compensation of \$6,298. If a lawyer has assisted the worker in determining their eligibility, they may also be entitled to an additional payment of up to \$4,700. The draft regulation is supported by a simple administrative process that allows an insurer access to all required information to make a decision and the opportunity for the worker to have their case heard.

Where an insurer does not consider a worker is eligible, the worker will be issued with reasons for the insurer's decision and will be able to have the decision administratively reviewed by an independent panel of legal experts. This is a one-off, short-term arrangement that does not provide a substitute, of course, for the full restoration of access to common law damages, but it addresses the significant disadvantage experienced by these workers.

The bill also fulfils the election commitment made by the government to introduce deemed disease coverage for certain latent onset diseases for Queensland firefighters. It amends the act to allow a firefighter who contracts one of 12 specified cancers to have that cancer deemed to be work related for workers compensation purposes where they meet the required qualifying period of active firefighting service.

I have previously been an auxiliary firefighter and have an understanding of the hard work that all of our firefighters do for our communities. During my consultation with firefighters across the state, I had a very productive meeting with representatives at Cairns Fire Station on Gatton Street that I would like to share with the House. On 31 January 2015 I met with Paul Rossi, the Behana Gorge RFB secretary; Jamie Haskill, the area training and support officer of RFSQ Cairns Peninsula; John Thompson, RFBAQ representative and Speewah fire warden; Yvonne Thompson, Clohesy group admin officer; Dave Mcilvenie, a Little Mulgrave fire warden; Bernadette Iraci, Springmount district RFB member; and Warren McNamara, Clohesy group officer. They outlined their concerns in terms of the 150 exposure events requirement in that, due to poor record keeping and loss of information through computer upgrades, it would be near impossible to prove that level of participation. Similarly, I note the recommendation of the Finance and Administration Committee that the additional requirement for volunteer firefighters to attend 150 exposure events should be omitted.

Unlike the former LNP government, the Palaszczuk government is listening to stakeholders, to the community and to our parliamentary committees. I will introduce an amendment to the bill during consideration in detail to omit the additional requirement for volunteer firefighters to attend 150 exposure events. This means that volunteers will be treated the same way as active permanent and auxiliary firefighters. These provisions will apply to firefighters diagnosed on or after 15 July 2015.

The bill also introduces a new entitlement for volunteer firefighters. Eligible active volunteer firefighters who contract one of the 12 specified cancers and who have their statutory claim determined using these deemed disease provisions will be entitled to access common law damages. This means that they will have not only the same coverage but also the same entitlements as permanent and auxiliary firefighters. No other jurisdiction that provides deemed disease legislation gives volunteer firefighters unfettered access to common law. These amendments will see Queensland with the best deemed disease arrangements for firefighters in the country.

The Palaszczuk government recognises that it would be unfair to time-limit deemed disease claims given the latent nature of these specified cancers. As such, there is no 10-year time limitation on making a claim following retirement from active firefighting service.

This government is proud to put forward these amendments, which will deliver nation-leading legislation—making it easier for brave Queensland firefighters to access compensation for work related cancers. I thank all those stakeholders who passionately advocated for these laws, including the United Firefighters Union of Queensland and their members, the Queensland Auxiliary Firefighters Association, the Rural Fire Brigades Association of Queensland and all the full-time, part-time, auxiliary and rural firefighters who met with MPs to discuss this legislation.

The bill will also realise the government's election commitment to remove prospective employers' ability to access an individual worker's compensation claim history. Privacy concerns have been raised about access to this information, and there is potential for the information to be misused to discriminate against certain workers, for example older workers in manual occupations.

The bill also makes a number of miscellaneous amendments, including clarifying the Workers' Compensation Regulator's discretion to grant extensions of time to lodge review applications if the applicant can satisfy the regulator that special circumstances exist. This follows the decision of the Industrial Court in *Blackwood v Pearce* which restricted this discretion.

I will also introduce amendments to the Industrial Relations Act 1999 during consideration in detail which seek to return the administrative responsibility for the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission and Registry to the president and to remove the restrictive local lawyer requirement for appointment as a deputy president, court. The former LNP government moved administrative responsibility to the vice-president and placed a severe limitation on appointments to the role of deputy president, court. They did this without any adequate explanation and, in doing so, put the commission and Industrial Court out of step with similar institutions around the country. In other jurisdictions, administrative responsibilities are legislatively allocated to the president or provide the president the ability to delegate these responsibilities. The amendments I will introduce will remedy this and, with regard to the appointment of the position of deputy president, court, will have criteria consistent with those for the vice-president, court.

I thank the Finance and Administration Committee for its report tabled on 8 September 2015 regarding the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation and other Legislation Amendment Bill 2015. I also thank all organisations that made submissions to the committee and those who appeared as witnesses as part of the committee's inquiry.

Unlike the previous LNP government that did not listen even to their own LNP dominated committee, we have listened to the Finance and Administration Committee. The committee made six recommendations relating to the deemed disease provisions for firefighters, and it is proposed to support four recommendations in full and two recommendations in part. I am pleased to table the government's response to the committee's report.

Tabled paper: Finance and Administration Committee: Report No. 8, 55th Parliament—Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2015, government response [\[1103\]](#).

In recommendation 1 the committee recommends that amendments be made to allow for the inclusion of additional diseases that may be identified in the future. This recommendation is supported in part. The government supports the committee's view that the list of specified diseases under the deemed diseases provisions for firefighters should be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure it remains up to date with current research and community expectations. The government has concerns that the recommendation of the committee could have the potential to infringe fundamental legislative principles by enacting a provision that expressly or impliedly enables the act to be amended by subordinate legislation or executive action. However, the government notes that section 584 of the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation Act 2003 already requires the act to be formally reviewed at least once every five years. The government believes that this is the appropriate legislative mechanism for facilitating the review of this list. This act will next be reviewed in 2018.

In recommendation 2 the committee recommends that the requirement for rural volunteer firefighters to have attended 150 exposure incidents be omitted from the legislation. This recommendation is supported.

In recommendation 3 the committee recommends that the legislation be amended to include the appointment of an independent committee or panel to be established to consider exposures and assist in determining whether rebuttal of claims is warranted. This recommendation is supported in part. The government supports the committee's view that the deemed disease provisions for firefighters be supported by an independent committee that is established to consider a firefighter's exposures and to assist in determining whether the rebuttal of a claim is warranted.

As outlined in its submissions before the committee, the government proposes that an independent committee consisting of representatives of Queensland Fire and Emergency Services and key stakeholder groups be formed to advise WorkCover on a case-by-case basis on these issues. The government believes that this committee is able to be formed administratively and does not require legislative change. To ensure a robust and transparent approach is taken to these claims, the government proposed that WorkCover Queensland report to the parliament yearly on the operation of the deemed disease provisions as part of its annual reporting requirements.

In recommendation 4 the committee recommends that the department seek and incorporate additional scientific studies of exposure by firefighters including rural firefighters. This recommendation is supported.

In recommendation 5 the committee recommends that as a matter of priority Queensland Fire and Emergency Services implement a system of record keeping for firefighters including volunteer rural firefighters that tracks individual firefighters' exposure to incidents. This recommendation is supported.

Recommendation 6 states—

Should the Minister not agree with the Committee recommendations numbers 2 and 3, the Committee recommends that the Minister reconsider the definition of an exposure included in proposed new section 36F.

This recommendation is supported. Section 36F is no longer required as a result of the removal of the requirement for volunteer firefighters to attend 150 exposure incidents. Omitting this requirement will extend the same rights to volunteer firefighters as those enjoyed by full-time and auxiliary firefighters who contract one of 12 specified work related cancers.

I said at the outset that I value the committee process and that certainly I would listen to the committee's recommendations. This is in stark contrast to the former government, which ignored the all-party committee's recommendations on workers compensation. In spite of the LNP's scaremongering and misinformation campaign, it is clear to anyone who reads the bill that the Palaszczuk government's legislation gives Queensland firefighters the best workers compensation access of all jurisdictions. The LNP had three long years in government to act to protect firefighters but did nothing when it had the power to do so. It was only in opposition that the LNP developed enough hollow empathy to introduce a rushed, fundamentally flawed bill that leaves firefighters, especially rural firefighters, exposed and nowhere near as well off as they are under the government's bill. This bill is

about restoring the workers compensation scheme to one that is fair, sustainable and efficient by balancing low premium rates for employers with good benefits for workers. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mr BLEIJIE** (Kawana—LNP) (8.49 pm): I move—

That the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation (Protecting Firefighters) Amendment Bill be now read a second time.

I rise to speak to the private member's bill—the protecting firefighters legislation. I note that this is a cognate debate with the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2015. I introduced the protecting firefighters legislation, and Ian Walker, the shadow Attorney-General, has asked me to comment on a few of the issues contained in the other piece of legislation we are dealing with in the cognate debate tonight.

I just heard the Treasurer speak and he went on with all this rhetoric—that this is about fairness for the employer and fairness for the worker, that they are listening and consulting. Well, it is not. This is about that old song *Solidarity Forever* and this is the union payback. This is one of the union payback bills. The legislation we have seen introduced into this parliament in the last six months has mostly been about undoing everything the LNP government did or paying back the unions—or in some instances both. We know that the preselections of a lot of members opposite are reliant on legislation that goes before this House and what is passed in this House. We know from question time this morning that donations are subject to what goes on in this House and what bills are debated in this House. We know that members opposite have all but come in here and—

Ms Grace interjected.

Mr BLEIJIE: We have a great former union official interjecting now. Let their voices be heard tonight, because I am 60 seconds in and I have not even started yet! Mr Deputy Speaker Ryan, I do apologise for the private conversation we had earlier where I said that everything would be very friendly tonight. The civilities lasted 60 seconds, Mr Deputy Speaker.

As I was saying, I have heard members in the government come in here and all but sing that song *Solidarity Forever*. We heard a lot of it being sung out the front over the last few years. We heard a lot of the new members talk about comrades in their maiden speeches. I think it is the first time in Queensland's history that more union officials than family members have been thanked in maiden speeches. That is quite telling for a government. Is it any wonder when you look at this bill and other bills that have been brought before this House in the last few months? There are real issues facing Queenslanders—domestic violence, law and order on our streets, the lowest police morale in Queensland since the Fitzgerald days—but we continually come in here and debate bills that are really payback to the union. The Treasurer said only a few minutes ago, 'We are listening. We are consulting. The difference between this government and the former LNP government is that we are listening and we are consulting.'

Mr Pitt: Correct.

Mr BLEIJIE: I take the interjection. He said, 'Correct.' So what is the Treasurer's response to an email I received today at 12.12 pm—and I understand it was sent to all members in this House—from Nick Behrens from the Chamber of Commerce & Industry Queensland? I will table this email later in the debate, but now I will get to the nuts and bolts of the email he sent to all members of parliament. Remember, this is the director of advocacy and workplace relations from CCIQ. He said—

Accordingly, CCIQ calls on your support to block the passage of the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill.

So the peak business group in Queensland is saying to all the Labor members, all the LNP members, the crossbenchers and the Independents: 'Block this bill we are debating tonight. Block it.' The Treasurer said that he is listening, that they have listened, that they have consulted—but obviously not. That begs the question: if we are debating this bill tonight and if that is the view of the CCIQ, who did the Treasurer listen to? We know who he listened to. He listened to the unions, he listened to—

Mr Pitt interjected.

Mr BLEIJIE: The Treasurer raises the member for Coomera's report when he was the chair of the Finance and Administration Committee. In a minute I will talk about another report that I note the Treasurer did not mention in his little contribution. I will talk about that report because it is far more significant than the member for Coomera's report—and I am not denigrating the member for Coomera. I will tell the House what report I am talking about in a minute, but I will leave you in suspense on that one.

I recall when we had this debate with respect to workers compensation a couple of years ago that Labor members in the opposition at the time were saying, 'This is workers compensation. It is about the workers. What do the employers have to do with this?' Well, the employers pay for the workers compensation. The premiums are paid for by the employer. So when you look at workers compensation in Queensland, you ought to not just look at the employee who derives the benefits of the workers compensation scheme. If you did not have the employer, you would not have a scheme because there would be no money going into it. My concern is that every member of this chamber has been sent a letter this afternoon from the CCIQ. I assume that the Labor members would have hardworking chambers of commerce that are in each of their electorates.

Mr Minnikin: A lot of small businesses.

Mr BLEIJIE: There are a lot of small businesses in all of their electorates. When the debate unfolds this evening I will be keen to see how they respond to the email from the CCIQ. When this bill passes either late this evening or tomorrow, how will they go out to their small businesses in their electorates and say, 'The Labor government is about small business in Queensland but essentially we have just jacked up your workers compensation by about 20 per cent'?

Mr Pitt: We've heard it all before.

Mr BLEIJIE: You have not heard it all before; you have another 53 minutes to hear. The issue here is that when introducing the bill the Treasurer said that they would achieve the level of \$1.20 for average premiums that the LNP achieved. It is quite interesting because when he was in opposition he actually claimed credit for the reduction in the workers compensation premium. I recall saying at the time that the member of parliament had achieved more in opposition than any government had achieved in Queensland because he claimed credit for the reduction because of changes they made in 2010. The reality of that was that the chairman of the WorkCover board, Mr Glenn Ferguson, who is the current chair of the WorkCover board, wrote to the government at the time saying that, yes, the 2010 amendments had an impact on the reduction of the average premium of \$1.20, but without the 2013 amendments they would not have been able to achieve the \$1.20 average premium.

The Treasurer tries to be tricky. We know he has been coin tossing in this place before. He likes a magic trick. He is trying to fool the Queensland public by saying that passing this legislation tonight will not have an impact on workers compensation. What he fails to understand is that when you put pressure on the workers compensation scheme and then the economy goes bust, stagnates or goes down and you do not have the money there, then the premium will start to rise again. It will start to skyrocket again, like it did under the former Labor government.

The Treasurer says that businesses will wake up tomorrow and will still be paying a premium of \$1.20. However, we know they are using some of the solvency money and the reason the money is there is for a rainy day. If there is not the protection of having the money there for the scheme, when the worker needs it most, the employer will not have the money there to pay for it.

The Treasurer is also being tricky when he talks about the premium of \$1.20. Members of this parliament will understand that the premium of \$1.20 is an average premium. Not all businesses in Queensland pay \$1.20; some pay more and some pay a little less because we have the industry rates as well. If a business is on an industry rate for clothing, textile, abattoir—whatever the case may be—it may be a little more than \$1.20. But the minute they have a common law claim and they have to fork out \$200,000 to \$300,000, their premium skyrockets. So the Treasurer cannot come in here and say to the people of Queensland, 'This is not going to impact on premiums,' because he knows that this is an average premium. When individual businesses are struck by common law claims, the industry rate can rise. Also WorkCover can insure more against the individual business and they can be paying more; and they will not be paying \$1.20. Let us get that sorted out. I know that other members will also be speaking about it.

Ultimately, the question for the Treasurer when he says they have listened is: what does he say to the CCIQ, which just sent a letter to his office that said, 'Do not pass this legislation'? Labor members in this House with small businesses in their electorates will find that their local representative chambers of commerce are saying, 'Do not pass this legislation.' They will go out next week and talk to their small businesses and try to convince them that the legislation the government is passing either tonight or tomorrow is in the best interests of small business. It is not.

We know what this is about. It is about two groups in Queensland. It is, of course, about the union movement and it is about greedy lawyers. Two years ago those greedy lawyers protested out the front of Parliament House and do honourable members know what they said? They said, 'Workers' rights,

workers' rights.' Do these members not think that the personal injuries lawyers advocating for this change to the common law threshold did not have a little self-interest at heart in this debate? I am not sure—

Mr Costigan interjected.

Mr BLEIJIE: I take the interjection, although I do not know how I can take that. The member will have to yell it out.

Mr Crandon: A big bit.

Mr BLEIJIE: A big bit of self-interest, as the member for Coomera says. The Queensland public, employers and the CCIQ are not fooled by all the lobbying we have seen come through our offices from the Lawyers Alliance and so forth that they are doing because it is in the best interests of the worker. I recall the Treasurer and the then shadow Attorney-General said that when the legislation was passed and the common law threshold of five per cent was introduced there were going to be cases of people not being able to make claims under common law. I cannot recall once in two years the Treasurer standing in this place after the laws were passed and bringing an issue into this place saying, 'XYZ has been wronged by this legislation.' There was one I recall that he mentioned. I used the hypothetical answer that someone might just be a serial complainant. The person they trot in here as a reason why they needed to change the legislation was a serial complainant. The Queensland community, the business community are not going to cop it.

What the crossbenchers and the Independents of this parliament need to understand is that the CCIQ have this afternoon issued notice to all members of parliament saying, 'Do not pass this legislation.' In fact, they used the word 'block'. I am not going to read it into *Hansard*, but I am happy to table a copy of the items that the CCIQ wish to bring to the attention of honourable members.

They have four points. This is a paragraph I probably should read out. It says—

CCIQ has received assurances from the State Government that these amendments will not impact the State's capacity to maintain premiums at \$1.20 per \$100 in wages on average for Queensland employers despite—

here is the kicker—

WorkCover Queensland's—

and, remember, WorkCover Queensland is the body that actually sets the premiums—

confirmation that the impact of the changes will mean the breakeven premium will need to rise to \$1.36.

WorkCover Queensland sets the premiums based on the actuaries and so forth and the Labor government has said no change despite the fact that WorkCover Queensland's confirmation that the impact of the changes will mean that the break-even premium will need to rise to \$1.36. When I was the minister responsible for this legislation I heard stories when I travelled to abattoirs and other places that had issues with workplace health and safety—and they made some great improvements in workplace health and safety. They were telling me the biggest concern they had as a small or even a large business was workers compensation premiums; they were killing their businesses. They had set about making great changes to their workplaces so that they had lower injuries, but the minute they had a common law claim—and remember there was no impairment threshold. It was not even zero per cent. So no matter what injury a person sustained if they did not want to go to the statutory scheme, they would go to the common law claim. We put the five per cent in place which said the injury had to have a whole body impairment of five per cent and it has been working well. Businesses are happy; employees are happy. No-one out there has been protesting in the streets for the past two years saying they are unhappy with the scheme. No-one has been protesting.

Miss Boyd interjected.

Mr BLEIJIE: I take the interjection. Not even the unions have been protesting in the last 12 months that the scheme is bad.

Mr Powell interjected.

Mr BLEIJIE: You did not say union? Repeat it so I can carry on with that.

When we introduced the bill the unions did protest. Once the legislation passed and people actually saw the benefits of it and the fact that no-one was worse off, no-one protested. Then we had an election, a socialist government was elected, they came in here just to pay back the unions and we get this sort of legislation come through. No-one has had an issue with it.

Mrs Smith interjected.

Mr BLEIJIE: I take the interjection from the honourable member about the cost to business. This will cost business. I have heard stories firsthand from businesses across Queensland that, because of these changes, they will have somewhere in the order of \$200,000 to \$500,000 in workers compensation premiums. How many people can they employ with that sort of money, additional employees?

Mr Pitt: The premiums are not going up.

Mr BLEIJIE: I take the interjection from the Treasurer that the premium is not going up. The premium will go up. It will go up because the Labor Party will do what the Labor Party always does: spend the money, and there will be nothing in there for a rainy day. When it does rain—and it will; based on economic forecasts last week it will rain—the Labor Treasurer will stand up and say, 'There is no money. We have to increase premiums.' That is what is going to happen. That is what has always happened.

The honourable Treasurer uses the report of the member for Coomera and the former finance committee as an excuse for having to introduce this. Let us go back to a report done in 2009-10. Does the Treasurer know which one I am referring to?

Mr Pitt: I am still in suspense.

Mr BLEIJIE: Keep it that way. He will recall that the LNP was not in government in 2009-10. So it was obviously a Labor government. A report was produced in 2009-10 by the WorkCover board, a board appointed by the Labor Party. Guess who the chairman of the board was? Does anyone want to hazard a guess?

Ms Leahy: Could be a union member.

Mr BLEIJIE: No, it is better than that. Does anyone want to hazard a guess? The newly elected members will not have a clue who this is.

Mr Powell interjected.

Mr BLEIJIE: Yes, I take the interjection from the member for Glass House. The chairman of the WorkCover board was Labor luminary Ian Brusasco. Ian Brusasco was in charge of the fundraising for the Labor Party. He was chair of the WorkCover board, produced a report in 2009 and said that the government should introduce a common law threshold of not five per cent, but 10 to 15 per cent. So we had the Labor Party's chief financial fundraiser, the chairman of WorkCover, saying the Labor government at the time should introduce changes to WorkCover of a 10 to 15 per cent threshold on common law claims. Now, that would have been spectacular.

Well, it was spectacular that it was from a Labor luminary, but it was more spectacular because other jurisdictions in Australia have 15 to 20 per cent and I think one of them has a 30 per cent threshold. So Queensland pales into comparison with a five per cent common law threshold. We were the lowest and we were the only jurisdiction in Australia to keep journey claims to protect the workers. We kept it at a five per cent common law threshold, and that was how we were able to reduce the premium from \$1.45 to \$1.20, saving small business in Queensland 17 per cent. The Labor governments in other jurisdictions had introduced these common law thresholds somewhere up around the 20 and 30 per cent mark. Ian Brusasco, the Labor luminary, said that we should have a 10 to 15 per cent common law threshold. The current threshold of five per cent in Queensland is an extremely low threshold compared to other jurisdictions around the country.

I think that Queenslanders, who have now experienced approximately six to seven months of this government, understand what this government is about. This new government is not about the people. The government is not about small business in Queensland. The business community that we are talking to on this side of the House do not believe the Treasurer when he says they want to be open for business and they are a small business government. Those opposite do not like small business; the Labor Party never have. They have never liked medium enterprise business. They like unions, and they do everything they can to protect the unions.

Ms Leahy interjected.

Mr BLEIJIE: I take interjection from the member for Warrego, which is a beautiful place. I was there recently; thank you for the visit. Member for Warrego, I take your interjection: the union bosses. As I said, when you look through their maiden speeches, when you have to thank the union movement more than your family, the state is in trouble. That is essentially what has happened.

We have a situation now where the CCIQ are coming out and saying to members in this House, 'Do not support the workers compensation legislation.' You have small businesses out there who are being told by the Treasurer and Premier, 'This is a small business government. This is a pro-business government and we are open for business,' yet tonight the Treasurer of the state is going to slug small business in the state another 20 per cent for workers compensation. Let history record that when Labor gets its hands on it and makes these amendments to workers compensation—we consulted and we had the committee report, and thank you for the report—

Ms Jones interjected.

Mr BLEIJIE: I take the interjection from the minister, who was not in the chamber at the time so I will give her a little history lesson on this particular subject. The committee did produce a report. The reason we asked the committee to produce a report was to look at the issue of workers compensation. We looked at the report and we accepted a lot of the recommendations, rejected a couple of the recommendations and ended up with a scheme that by all accounts everyone seems happy with. Employees seem happy with it, employers seem happy with it, personal injury lawyers are not happy with it and other states are happy with it.

Mr Rickuss interjected.

Mr BLEIJIE: I take the interjection from the member for Lockyer. Before you arrived in the chamber I was talking about Ian Brusasco, who in fact recommended the 10 to 15 per cent common law threshold claim. The member has missed a good 20 minutes of my speech, but I am happy to go over the points I made again for the member for Lockyer. I will now table the letter from the CCIQ saying that the honourable members should not pass this legislation tonight.

Tabled paper: Email, dated 16 September 2015, from the Director, Advocacy & Workplace Relations, Chamber of Commerce & Industry Queensland, Mr Nick Behrens, to Members of the Queensland Legislative Assembly, regarding the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2015 [1104].

I also have a letter that I want to draw to members' attention. I do not want to table it because I tabled it on 22 May 2014. This is a letter from WorkCover Queensland dated 21 May 2014 to the Attorney-General. Glenn Ferguson writes to congratulate the government for making the necessary legislative reforms that have enabled WorkCover to provide Queensland employers with the lowest average premium rate in the nation. If we want to be a state which seeks investment and gets business to come to Queensland, we should have the lowest premium in the nation. The chair of WorkCover, Mr Glenn Ferguson, also states—

I note recent media statements regarding the premium announcement. The legislative amendments in 2010 provided a period of premium stability, as evidenced by the following premium rates.

...

During this period, WorkCover also received very positive investment returns which added to the financial viability of the fund.

Mrs Frecklington interjected.

Mr BLEIJIE: Member for Nanango, he further states—

However, it is important to note that without the 2013 legislative amendments, WorkCover would not have been able to reduce the average premium rate to the extent that it has for 2014/15, that is \$1.20.

Mr Pitt: Incorrect.

Mr BLEIJIE: Not correct? Everyone is gossiping, so you are obviously not interested in what I am saying. When I quoted the chair of WorkCover back in 2014, the Treasurer said 'not correct'. The Treasurer of the state of Queensland is rejecting advice from the chair of the WorkCover board that it was able to achieve \$1.20. Incidentally, this is the same chair of the WorkCover board that is giving advice to this Treasurer. By his interjection that this letter is not correct, does this Treasurer not have confidence in the WorkCover board? The Treasurer has no confidence in the WorkCover board because he said it is not correct. The reason I raise this again is because when the business community was getting behind these laws back in May 2014, the Treasurer, on Anastacia Palaszczuk MP letterhead at the time, put out that extraordinary—

Honourable members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! There is too much conversation in the chamber. There will be no conversation across the chamber, members. The member for Kawana has the call.

Mr BLEIJIE: Do members recall when the Treasurer had Mythbusters and believed in asset sales and then did not believe in asset sales? We have outlived Mythbusters, but I would like to refer to a press release that the shadow treasurer at the time, Curtis Pitt, put out dated 20 May 2014. The headline here is 'Desperate LNP takes credit for Labor's WorkCover premium decrease'.

Let us get this straight. In 2009-10 we had Ian Brusasco, the chair of WorkCover, saying that we should introduce common law thresholds of 10 to 15 per cent. That was rejected by the government. In fact, I think the health minister was the Attorney-General at the time who may have rejected that from Labor luminary Brusasco. Then in 2012 the new government introduced common law thresholds of five per cent, which was certainly under what Labor luminary Ian Brusasco wanted. We then had a couple of years of relative stability, and when the shadow Treasurer at the time worked out how good our legislative amendments were, he took a desperate step and put out a press release claiming credit for it while in opposition and said it was all because of the 2010 amendments. This is despite the fact that the chair of WorkCover put out a press release saying that the 2010 amendments helped, but they could not have achieved the \$1.20 premium without the 2013 amendments.

The Labor Party are always trying to rewrite history but all the Treasurer has to do is go back to *Hansard* and look at what he said at the time. He should have a look at the ridiculous press release he put out at the time which, incidentally, I do not think got a run anywhere because no-one believed it because it was unbelievable. In his response tonight the Treasurer really has to answer some fundamental questions. If he says that he has consulted and if he says that he is listening, he is obviously not listening to CCIQ because—

Mr Pitt interjected.

Mr BLEIJIE: Oh, a reference group! He says that he set up a reference group. Let me guess: is the reference group represented by personal injury lawyers here, unions here, workers here and employers here? He probably had one representative in the reference group from the CCIQ. Is it any wonder that they were outvoted, despite the fact the CCIQ members have to pay the premium so the employee has cover in the first place? Do you know what, Treasurer? Businesses go broke because of these premiums.

Mr Costigan: They go broke under Labor.

Mr BLEIJIE: I take the interjection from the member for Whitsunday. Businesses go broke under Labor; businesses do not employ people. In many electorates there are some businesses that have saved upwards of \$500,000. How many workers can be employed because of that saving? If they save \$500,000 they could hire another five, six or seven employees. That means more employees are working. That means the unemployment rate decreases in Queensland. That means more food on the table for struggling families in Queensland. How can that not be a good thing? Creating jobs, saving businesses money and having a scheme that people can rely on and not whinge about in two years— all the best of all those worlds lining up, and they are going to throw it all out tonight because union bosses control this government.

Government members interjected.

Mr BLEIJIE: I hear members opposite interjecting. I am looking at one particular member, but so insignificant is the member that I never remember her electorate. She is looking right at me. Can someone tell me which is her electorate? I cannot recall.

Mrs Smith: Pine Rivers.

Mr BLEIJIE: The member for Pine Rivers gets up in here and talks about 'the comrades'. I hope the member for Pine Rivers is on the speaking list. Oh, no, she is not on the list. I encourage the member for Pine Rivers to put herself on the list and defend the unions tonight. I would love to be a fly on the wall when she walks into a small business in her electorate, because the Pine Rivers community, like any community with a small business focus—

Miss Boyd: They love me, mate.

Mr BLEIJIE: Small businesses love you, do they?

Miss Boyd: Yes.

Mr Costigan interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Ryan): Order! I will wait for the House to come back to order. Member for Whitsunday, it is disorderly to interject but it is highly disorderly to interject from a seat other than your own. Member for Kawana, it is getting a bit heated. I ask you to return to the bill and direct your comments to the question before the House.

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. The member for Pine Rivers has just interjected and said that small businesses in her community love her. Following the passage of this legislation I look forward to seeing the postcards which state, 'I love you back so much that I am increasing your

premiums by 20 per cent.' I look forward to those postcards going out to the Pine Rivers electorate. I can guarantee her one thing: if she does not send out those postcards, we will. That is guaranteed. I am quickly running out of time.

Mrs Frecklington interjected.

Mr BLEIJIE: I take the interjection of the member for Nanango. I am fast running out of time, but I do have a lot more to say. Before I return to union bosses, thugs and everything that the Labor Party represents tonight in this legislation, I want to turn to firefighters—another piece of hypocrisy that is shown here tonight.

Ms Grace: We are all here because of him, and you all know it.

Mr BLEIJIE: There are only a few people who can hold a record for getting voted out by your constituents and then coming back. Not many people hold a record for getting voted out of office.

Honourable members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Honourable members!

Mr BLEIJIE: The waves of Brisbane Central; the tide comes in and out of Brisbane Central. It went out in 2012 for the member for Brisbane Central. It came back in 2015 and it will go out again shortly, I can assure her of that.

Let us talk about firefighters. On behalf of the LNP, I pay tribute to all the firefighters in Queensland. We have auxiliary firefighters, we have part-time firefighters, we have rural firefighter volunteers and we have full-time firefighters. Full-time and auxiliary firefighters drive the big red trucks and our rural firefighters drive yellow trucks. I find it amazing that the likes of the member for Pumicestone would laugh when talking about firefighters driving red and yellow trucks, because I bet he does not understand the difference between the yellow and red trucks and the importance of these men and women who serve our communities by protecting the member for Pumicestone's own electorate and constituents. I think his constituents would be horrified that he would make a joke of men and women serving in the Queensland Fire and Emergency Services. The member for Pumicestone has a lot to be ashamed about already in his role in this place, and I think tonight he has added to it. Well done!

We have about 30,000 to 35,000 rural firefighters across Queensland, and we have approximately 15,000 active rural firefighters. We also have over 2,000 full-time firefighters, our urban firefighters, who drive red trucks. Our rural firefighters, particularly in rural and regional Queensland, drive yellow trucks, and we have our auxiliary firefighters who do an amazing job as well. Prior to the last election the former LNP government had an accord with the firefighters. We said that we would introduce presumptive legislation. In order for members to fully appreciate presumptive legislation, it is this: under workers compensation legislation at the moment a firefighter is generally covered if they contract cancer or get injured in the course of their employment. The problem is that under the current scheme they have to prove the nexus between the injury and the work. They have to prove that the injury was sustained in the line of duty or because of their work.

Presumptive legislation is a little different. Presumptive legislation allows them to receive workers compensation payments, payouts and protections, but it also means that if one contracts cancer it is presumed for the purposes of the workers compensation claim that it was caused by their work. There are a couple of provisions with respect to the types of cancer. There are about 11 or 12 types of cancer. There are times of service that you must serve in the fire service because of the different types of cancer, which everyone accepts. In some communities auxiliary firefighters and rural firefighters serve from the same headquarters and sometimes can be called out to the same incident. If there is a crash on the road or a grassfire, those two can be called out at the same time.

Mr Rickuss interjected.

Mr BLEIJIE: There you go; thank you for that. When a firefighter attends a bushfire or a grassfire, for instance, they are not sure which toxins will be present—whether someone has dumped rubbish or tyres—and they go straight in and they are not protected. The LNP in opposition said that we would provide presumptive legislation. A couple of months ago I was very proud on behalf of the LNP to introduce presumptive legislation. Our presumptive legislation is the most generous presumptive legislation in the country for firefighters. When I talk about firefighters under our legislation, I am talking about rural, part-time, auxiliary and urban full-time firefighters. We talk about all firefighters. We have a definition of firefighters which contains all those wonderful Queenslanders who protect us from fires.

The unfortunate issue in this debate is that the Labor Party introduced its own presumptive legislation, but there was a major difference between the LNP legislation and the Labor Party legislation. The difference was full discrimination against rural firefighters. It is a slap in the face to 30,000 rural firefighters in Queensland. What the Labor Party said in its bill is that if you are an auxiliary or full-time firefighter and you attend a fire and you contract cancer you will be covered under this. But if you are a rural firefighter or a hardworking volunteer and you attend the same fire and you get cancer you are not covered unless you have attended 150 fires and unless you can prove you have attended 150 fires.

It was shameful. What was more shameful was that in this whole debate the member for Bundamba, the Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services and Minister for Corrective Services, never raised an issue publicly about this discrimination. She let it go for months. The LNP bill—a non-discriminatory bill—covered all firefighters while the Labor bill discriminates against 30,000 rural firefighters, and the member for Bundamba let the Treasurer take charge of it. She never made a comment as Minister for Emergency Services responsible for rural fireys—not a comment. The only comment she made in this place was to congratulate the Treasurer, who is about to introduce presumptive legislation into this chamber—that was all she said—but she did not stick up for the rural fireys when they realised that a bill had been introduced with this discrimination of 150 in it. I am pleased that, because of the hard work from the Rural Fire Brigades Association Queensland and Justin Choveaux and all the rural fireys in Queensland, we now have a government amendment before the House which will get rid of the 150 fires that the rural fireys have to attend and that will end the discrimination.

On that point, the member for Bundaberg has just taken her seat, so let us talk about the member for Bundaberg. The member for Bundaberg used the department of fire and emergency services to send out political propaganda in her electorate. An apolitical department—a department in which public servants are not meant to be politicised—was politicised by the member for Bundaberg who used her office to send out misleading information. So misleading was that information that the Treasurer is now forced to come in here and delete the 150 provision. She sent out information saying that the Labor bill was better than the LNP bill! She said that everyone will be protected under their bill and the LNP is spreading all of this misunderstanding and misinformation. If it was misinformation and misunderstanding, why is the Labor government moving amendments to its own bill tonight?

Why did the Labor members on the committee put forward a recommendation saying that it was wrong? In fact, the chairman of the committee commented that the Labor Party bill was unworkable. The Labor committee members said that the Labor bill was unworkable and said to delete the 150. Do I think this was done out of a good gesture for the rural fireys? Do I think that was the case? I wish it was, but I tell you why this is being done. The reason those opposite are introducing this bill is that they are worried our bill would pass this chamber. They knew it would pass this chamber, because who would turn their back on a rural firefighter in Queensland? Who would turn their back on a rural firefighter? Who would slap a rural firefighter in the face when they introduced this legislation and say, 'You're not worthy of protection if you have cancer unless you've served for 150 fires and you show us the pieces of paper to prove you've served for 150 fires'?

Mr Byrne interjected.

Mr BLEIJIE: I take the interjection from the member for Rockhampton, the Minister for Sport, and note him shaking his head. I did not—

Mr Byrne: You're an embarrassment!

Mr BLEIJIE: I take the interjection about being an embarrassment. The only embarrassment here is the fact that the Labor government introduced discriminatory legislation against rural firefighters in Queensland. That is what the embarrassment is, member for Rockhampton—not the fact that you have to come in here and change it but the fact that the Labor Party—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Furner): Order! You will address your comments through the chair.

Mr BLEIJIE: The only embarrassment here should be on the face of the member for Rockhampton, because the Labor Party introduced discriminatory legislation. I am sure that the member for Rockhampton has rural fireys in his electorate. I would have liked to have known what he said to the rural fireys: 'Oh well, we've introduced presumptive legislation but you're not covered unless you attend 150 fires, but if you're an auxiliary firefighter you're covered, if you're an urban firefighter you're covered.' How a government could even contemplate and then introduce legislation into this place with such discrimination is beyond me but not beyond the Labor Party because it does not have a plan, it does not know what it is doing and it acts on a whim because it has no planning and no clear plan in fact for what it is going to do.

For those Labor members who want to shake their heads at any of the contributions from me or the other members on this side of the chamber tonight, the fact will always remain—despite the fact that I assume the LNP bill will get voted down tonight because the amendments will go through in the Labor bill—that the Labor Party will be known as the ones who introduced discriminatory legislation against rural firefighters and we will tell every rural firefighter who asks, and I can assure all Labor members that there have been a lot who have been asking. They know because the member for Bundaberg got the Queensland Fire and Emergency Services to send out a political letter—something I have never seen done before, so much so that the commissioner for fireys, Ms Carroll, even admitted at estimates that it was the wrong thing to do and that the department should not have sent out political letters. But what would you expect from the Labor Party when a Labor member goes to their local fire bureaucrats and says, 'I want you to send this out to people and explain the difference between the LNP bill and the Labor bill'?

The rural fireys did not need an explanation. They knew clearly what was going on. They knew exactly what was going on, and they knew that the Labor Party introduced discriminatory legislation and that the LNP started this process. I want to pay tribute to the Rural Fire Brigades Association Queensland that did an outstanding job in its campaign right around Queensland. It did such an outstanding job that the Labor government committee members were forced to recommend changes against their own government's legislation and so outstanding was its campaign that Labor government members will be forced to vote on their legislation with an amendment. It is not really an amendment amending a clause; it is an amendment deleting a clause like it was never there. That is what those opposite want. I suspect that they would like to go back in time a little bit and wish they had never put it in there, but they did and it will be forever on the record that they did.

When all of the Labor members go back to their communities next week and tell them how great they are with small business when they have just increased premiums by 20 per cent, they can then go and have scones with the rural fireys and tell them that they had all of this legislation that was great for rural firefighters. For every business they go into claiming their workers compensation changes are good for business, we will have already been there and told the business the truth. For every rural firefighter they want to get in a photo with and tell them how great their legislation is, we will have already been there. They will know. The rural fireys will know when the Labor member for Pumicestone and the Labor member for Pine Rivers all show up for their photographs with rural fireys and their yellow trucks. They will know that they were sold out by the Labor Party. They were sold out by the Labor Party, which has been forced to come in here and amend its own legislation.

I have to say that it is a pretty substantial amendment. Those opposite did not reduce it from 150 to 70 to 50 to 10; they are just deleting it like it never existed. It is very similar to the LNP bill. In fact, it is like a copy of the LNP bill, so I think the Labor Party should just vote for the LNP bill. Tonight if I had my way Labor members would do the honourable thing in realising that they completely got this one wrong and completely discriminated against the rural fireys and they should just vote with the LNP. I am a man of bipartisanship on most occasions—on some occasions—and I think the grown-up thing here would be for the Labor government to put down its weapons this evening in the battle of parliament and vote—

Mr Costigan: An armistice.

Mr BLEIJIE: Yes, call an armistice. Those opposite should put down their weapons and vote with the LNP. The LNP bill is a far greater bill. It offers far greater protection than the Labor bill ever will, so I think they should just acknowledge that they got it wrong. The Treasurer says that he is listening to Queenslanders because they are moving an amendment. Do not worry about moving the amendment. Save us all some time tomorrow and just vote for the LNP bill. Vote for the LNP bill to give the best protection to rural fireys. I say to the crossbenchers and the Independents: do not just vote with the Labor Party on its amendments; vote with the LNP. Vote with the LNP. Vote with the LNP to support rural firefighters and all the other firefighters in Queensland. Vote with the LNP to support small business. Small business creates jobs in this state. Politicians do not create jobs, governments do not create jobs; small business creates jobs in this state. The government's responsibility is to create an economic environment in which small business can prosper.

An opposition member interjected.

Mr BLEIJIE: I take that interjection. Governments provide the framework for business to prosper. I have been in this place for almost seven years now. The members of the Labor Party come in here and never talk about small business. They go out, they have these little reviews, these seminars and these talkfests. Today, the advocate for North Queensland was in here saying that she is going to hold

another summit. I do not know how many summits they are up to. Someone suggested four or five. I am not quite sure what the outcomes of the other summits were. For the members of the Labor Party, it is about ticking boxes. It is so they can stand up and say, 'We had a summit on that.' They do not know what the outcomes were. They do not intend to do anything with it. Kevin Rudd was the same. Do members remember the 2020 summit that he held in Canberra? Nobody knows what happened with that. The members of the Labor Party are all the same. They just tick a box.

Mr BYRNE: I rise to a point of order. Mr Deputy Speaker, is it at all possible to bring the member back to something approaching the bill?

Mr BLEIJIE: Mr Deputy Speaker, on the point of order—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Furner): Order! Member for Kawana, we are debating the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill and the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation (Protecting Firefighters) Amendment Bill in cognate. I draw you back to those matters.

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. For the benefit of the member for Rockhampton, the honourable minister, I point out that workers compensation has a little bit to do with small business. I was commenting on the summit for small business in North Queensland that the Labor Party announced this morning. I say to the member for Rockhampton that I would have thought that a summit on small business creation and workers compensation, which drives the economy of small business and the efficiency of small business, is pretty well connected. That shows one thing. The member for Rockhampton has just confirmed to this House that the Labor government has no interest in small business and does not care what happens with small business—hence why we have this bill tonight.

We suspect that there will be a 20 per cent increase in workers compensation premiums in the electorates of those opposite. That 20 per cent increase in workers compensation premiums will flow on. The Treasurer has said on occasion that there is plenty of solvency in the workers compensation fund. That did not happen by accident. It happened because of government policy and regulation. There is money there and that money has meant that WorkCover can reduce the premium. If WorkCover does not have any money—

Mr Power: Thanks, Cameron.

Mr BLEIJIE: I take that interjection. The member is thanking the health minister, who at the time was the attorney-general. The member may not have heard me earlier, but a letter from the chair of WorkCover advising the Labor government was tabled. In that letter he said—

However, it is important to note that without the 2013 legislative amendments, WorkCover would not have been able to reduce the ... premium.

The LNP government was in power in 2013. I know that the member was not in this place at that time, but he should not come into this place and try to rewrite history and say how good the Labor Party is for business, because it is not. In 2010, the Labor government made amendments to WorkCover, but the attorney-general at the time, Cameron Dick, had recommendations from Ian Brusasco, the chair of WorkCover at the time, to introduce common law thresholds of 10 per cent to 15 per cent, which was rejected by the attorney-general and the government at that time. It was then the former LNP government that introduced a five per cent common law threshold, against the wishes of Ian Brusasco, who wanted a 10 per cent to 15 per cent common law threshold. It is now this Labor government that is ripping that out. This will lead to increased premiums for every small business in Queensland.

I have just attended the 15-year anniversary of Australian Off Road. That company builds a fantastic camper. That business used to be based in the Kawana electorate, but it is now based in the Caloundra electorate. That company is now a growing, national company. If people want to buy a camper or a caravan from Australian Off Road, there is now a 10-month wait. It is a fantastic local company. When I went to see them years ago as a local member they were telling me the extraordinary bills that they had to pay for workers compensation above the average premium. It was that sort of feedback that the LNP received right across Queensland that led us to make the necessary changes to get the average workers compensation premium down from \$1.45 to \$1.20.

I go back to that interjection by the member for Logan. We do not have a \$1.20 premium—the lowest premium in the nation—because of the Labor government. It was because of the LNP government and tonight the Labor government is ripping all of that up as part of this whole 'de-Newmanisation' of Queensland. The Labor government is ripping up that legislation and the people who will suffer will be small businesses, medium sized businesses and large business in Queensland. That is who will suffer.

All the rhetoric that the members opposite gave at the time the LNP introduced that legislation—'The world is going to come to an end. Workers will not be entitled to common law claims'—just proved to be nonsense. Workers received their claims. If they had a common law claim they could get it. If they fell under the five per cent threshold they would get a statutory claim. In the two years since that legislation was introduced I cannot recall sad situations being raised in this House where people could not get what they ordinarily would have been entitled to.

The other matter that I want to raise—

An honourable member interjected.

Mr BLEIJIE: I am fast running out of time. I am 55 minutes down. The other matter that I wanted to raise is that, when we debated that legislation, we moved an amendment that meant that an employer could get a copy of the claims history of an employee. That was not a snooping exercise; that was an exercise to work out if the employer was going to be subjected to a series of complaints that a potential employee had made to other employers, particularly if they worked in the agricultural sector. From farm to farm—

An opposition member: Strawberry farmers.

Mr BLEIJIE: Strawberry farmers—employees going from farm to farm saying, 'I bent over and hurt my back.' 'Claim here.' Then they would go to the next business and that employer did not have any knowledge of that. If a citizen signs up to a health insurance policy, that person has to disclose pre-existing ailments. They have to disclose all sorts of things. If a person takes out house insurance they have to say how many claims they have made in the past seven years. That practice is a standard part of society. Again, to protect the unions, tonight this government is ripping that up. It is out the window.

If the Labor government is truly listening, then it should listen to the CCIQ, which today sent a letter to all the offices of all the Labor members right around Queensland on behalf of their small-business membership. That letter told the Labor members to block the legislation that it is about to embark on. The members of the government are about to get up and speak about their comrades and read whatever the CFMEU or the ETU have sent them to say. I would just caution the Labor members to not be as excited in quoting union officials in this place any longer, because in Queensland and around the nation we are slowly seeing unravel the systemic corruption in the union movement. So if I were them I would just take a little step back in my enthusiasm in endorsing the union movement. But we are about to hear another day of that as the members opposite go into this debate.

In the last few minutes that I have, I want to talk about the firefighters. On behalf of the LNP, I want to place on the record our great thanks to the firefighters in Queensland. Like the police, the ambulance and other emergency services, whether it is a fire or an emergency situation in a city, when communities step out our firefighters and our emergency services workers step in. Whether you are a rural firefighter, or an urban firefighter, or an auxiliary firefighter, I want to place on record our ultimate thanks to those service men and women in those professions. They do an outstanding job in protecting our communities, keeping Queenslanders safe, responding to the health and safety needs of our society. They do an amazing job and they should be thanked absolutely for that. On behalf of the LNP I thank all of those courageous men and women in those emergency services. We owe it to those firefighters who put their lives on the line, including the rural firefighters, to give them this protection.

We owe the same level of protection to rural firefighters, urban firefighters and full-time firefighters. We are talking here about people with cancer. There is no good outcome in this situation. A person who is claiming this cover has got the raw end of the deal: they have got cancer. Many Queenslanders have cancer. My mother is a survivor of cancer. That has led my family to support as many cancer organisations as we can. We are very blessed that mum is still alive and in remission. However, not so many Queenslanders are so lucky. When you are put in harm's way like our firefighters the state should be there to back you up. The state should be there to protect you in your hour of need and you should not have to fight the state for your compensation. That is why we introduced the private member's bill that protected all firefighters. I call on all members on the crossbenches not to pay lip-service and move an amendment of this and that, but to support the LNP bill because it was truly a bill that protected and backed all our firefighters no matter what colour fire truck they drove.

 **Ms FARMER** (Bulimba—ALP) (9.50 pm): As the chair of the Finance and Administration Committee I rise to speak in the cognate debate on the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2015 and the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation (Protecting

Firefighters) Amendment Bill 2015. Although the committee examined both bills at the same time we have produced two separate reports. I state at the outset that it is, of course, the government bill that I support. I have listened, as unfortunately we have all had to for the last hour, to the member for Kawana.

Mr Dick: An hour of your life you're not going to get back.

Ms FARMER: That is right. I listened to his fine words about his support for firefighters, but when you look at the bill the member for Kawana has put up you see that it is so full of holes and so poorly drafted and, in fact, so sloppy that in my view it would actually be irresponsible for this parliament to support it. It would leave those fine volunteer firefighters, who put their lives on the line every day—day in and day out—whom he has said to us that he is supporting, completely vulnerable and in a worse position than they are right now. I will talk on that a little bit later.

The aim of the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2015 is to fulfil Labor's election promise to reinstate common law rights for injured workers who are affected by changes made in 2013 and to establish the ability to provide additional compensation to particular workers impacted by the operation of the common law threshold. It provides greater certainty of entitlement and accessibility to compensation for firefighters by introducing deemed disease provisions for firefighters with prescribed diseases and it prohibits prospective employers from continuing to access an individual's claims history as they have been able to following another change made by the 2013 amendment act.

In what I think is a record for our committee, we have agreed on six recommendations to the minister, all relating to the amendments affecting firefighters. I believe that this is acknowledgement by all members of the committee, no matter what side we are on, of the valuable contribution that is made by our state's firefighters, whether they are full-time, auxiliary or volunteer, and the importance of relieving them of the burden of proving that certain deemed diseases were contracted during their duties. I thank the minister very much for his acknowledgement of the issues that we raised and note that of the six recommendations he has accepted four and partially accepted two. I think all members of the committee, whatever side we are on, will be delighted to hear that.

Although we made no recommendations in the private member's bill, scrutiny of our report on that bill does reflect the sentiments behind those same six recommendations that we made on the government bill and I believe that they are an implicit acknowledgement by the non-government members that the bill proposed by the member for Kawana leaves firefighters high and dry. It leaves them without access to common law damages. It does not ensure that the proposed amendments interact adequately with section 36A and it leaves them without provisions to ensure that should the insurer be unable to meet its obligations the fund has access to make payments from the Consolidated Fund. It promises everything but it is actually all for show and it leaves them with less than nothing. He has basically played politics with volunteer firefighters. Because the bill was so badly drafted he has left the non-government members of our committee in the embarrassing position of having to defend and actually make recommendations to fix up the bill so that it had some semblance of credibility. I actually felt quite sorry for them having to defend the bill when it was so badly written.

Before I talk too much about firefighters, I would like to go back to the other elements of this bill which are also of huge importance to workers across the state, including firefighters. The Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill restores justice to workers who had been subject to the travesty which was the LNP's Workers' Compensation Act 2013. Even without examining that act in detail, the very way in which it came into existence was a thumbing of the nose to the principles of integrity and accountability. Many submitters to our committee on both sides of the argument referred to the inquiry that was conducted by the former Finance and Administration Committee chaired by my colleague, the member for Coomera and deputy chair of our committee. That former committee conducted an 11-month inquiry into workers compensation, hearing submissions from an enormous range of stakeholders and making a well-considered 32 recommendations. Did the stakeholders consider it a thorough process? Yes. Did they consider it a fair process? Yes. Yes to both questions. Stakeholders through our inquiry still referred to it in the most positive way and I congratulate the member for Coomera on that.

However, the member for Kawana, who was the attorney-general at the time, not only ignored most of the recommendations, he did not even take the subsequent bill to the committee. He introduced it on the Tuesday and they passed it on the Thursday. Urgent he said it was. So much for all the consultation and so much for respect for the committee system. What did he do with his own bill this time around? He introduced his bill, but then he did not have time to come and talk to our committee

about it. There were 156 submitters who were all able to make the time to submit and/or speak to the committee. A total of 119 submissions were received by those good volunteer rural firefighters and rural fire brigades, but the member for Kawana was a bit busy. Alan Gillespie, Karen Thompson, Graeme McWilliam—all rural fireys—were all happy to make the effort to come and see the committee because it was so important to them and we thank them. But it was not on the agenda for the member for Kawana. He just did that bill for show.

What a stark contrast there is between the member for Kawana and the minister who is now taking a well-considered workers compensation bill through the House. One has no interest at all in transparency and accountability and no interest in the accountability that the committee system provides, and the other—the Treasurer and Minister for Employment, Industrial Relations—who put so much faith in the committee system that he is willing to reconsider some of the major tenets of the bill he introduced once the results of our inquiries were known. Queenslanders can once again be comfortable that the Palaszczuk government is a consensus government and that accountability and transparency are a fundamental part of the way we operate.

The Workers' Compensation Act 2013 introduced a limitation on the entitlement to seek damages that requires a worker to have a degree of permanent impairment as a result of the injury greater than five per cent in order to access common law. The government bill we are now considering removes that limitation. Under its proposed amendments the greater than the five per cent threshold will be removed for all injuries that occur on or after 31 January 2015. In its evidence the department advised that reinstating common law entitlements for injured workers has the potential to provide an estimated additional 1,800 injured workers a year—many of them with a low degree of permanent impairment assessments, especially those whose ability to return to work may be impacted by their injury—with access to common law damages with an average common law payment of \$110,000. We consider it is unfair and inconsistent to exclude one class of person—that is, those injured in workplaces who suffer an impairment of less than six per cent—when those injured in other circumstances have the ability to seek damages through access to common law for those injuries.

I believe that the imposition of a permanent impairment threshold to determine whether workers have access to common law is arbitrary and does not reflect a worker's disability or ongoing work capacity. Many submitters gave examples of this to our committee. For instance, the Australian Lawyers Alliance reported a number of instances of workers with injuries assessed at five per cent or less who are no longer able to work due to their injury, have had to change careers entirely on account of their injury, have had extended periods off to recover from their injury in order to return to work and have returned to work in a part-time capacity only or on limited duties on account of their injury. There are many aspects of this bill that I would like to cover, but time does not permit, so I will touch on some of the major issues. I wish no disrespect to the many stakeholders who took the time to submit and/or appear before us, but I can assure them that we considered their views greatly and had many deliberations in coming to our decisions.

One of those issues we deliberated on is the amendments relating to the entitlement given to prospective employers under section 571D of the act to apply to the Workers' Compensation Regulator for a copy of a prospective worker's claims history summary, which will be removed under clause 30. If this point does not illustrate the most blatant example of hypocrisy on the part of the LNP, then I do not know what does, given all the carrying on these people did about the union encouragement clauses and apparent breaches of privacy. We heard it all through the debate on the Industrial Relations (Restoring Fairness) Bill and we heard it all through the estimates hearings. In fact, throughout the estimates hearings they took up literally hours on the point. I am still getting over the member for Mount Ommaney somehow trying to link union encouragement clauses to the Indigenous task force. We have seen high dudgeon and outrage on behalf of all Queenslanders, yet their very own government, through its workers compensation bill, introduced the most outrageous breach of privacy and they did not even blink.

Would people in this House like to know how many WorkCover claims have been accessed since the bill was proclaimed in 2013? Over 26,000 and rising! Submitter after submitter told us how their members were afraid to claim on an injury because it might be used against them in the future and how, even though it did not give an employer any significant information about a person's suitability for the job, it was still used against them. The Anti-Discrimination Commissioner expressed extreme concern, stating—

The limited use is far outweighed by the potential misuse of the information to the detriment of the applicant.

Do you get an opt-out clause under the LNP act, as you do under the union encouragement provisions? No, you get no say at all! This bill restores the rights of Queensland workers and allows them to apply for a job on an even playing field.

I move to those amendments that affect presumptive legislation for firefighters. Much research has been undertaken around the world into the cancer risks for firefighters. Most recently in Australia, a significant study was undertaken by Monash University, which studied over 200,000 firefighters. It showed that, for male career full-time firefighters compared to the Australian population, the overall cancer incidence was significantly raised, but there was no trend of overall cancer increasing with the duration of service for male volunteer firefighters.

Under general workers compensation arrangements, the onus is on firefighters with cancer to pinpoint an event that caused their illness. This requirement is often difficult to satisfy and can be an insurmountable obstacle to firefighters seeking compensation at a time when they are struggling physically, emotionally and financially. The Firefighter Cancer Foundation Australia advised us that, in its experience, paid firefighters will use up all their sick leave, annual leave, long service leave or superannuation income protection while they are going through their treatment. Of course, volunteer firefighters who contract those specific diseases do not have leave benefits from their voluntary employment as firefighters. The FCFA advised that many firefighters with cancer do not file a workers compensation claim in the mistaken belief that, until there is presumptive legislation, their claim will not be accepted.

There was no doubt in our minds that in Queensland we should have legislation that provides for the needs of all firefighters, including full-time, auxiliary and volunteer firefighters. During their careers, firefighters risk their lives to protect the public and property. When faced with a life-threatening illness that is caused by their employment, we have a moral obligation to reduce the stress and hardship that a diagnosis of that type will have on that employee. Presumptive legislation is about reducing the time and energy required. Under the government's deemed disease provisions, if a current or former firefighter is diagnosed with one of 12 specified latent onset injuries and has been engaged in active firefighting duties for a specified number of years, their injury is deemed to be work related.

The bill increases the rights of volunteer firefighters by providing access to common law under the provisions of the act for persons with a deemed disease. However, until we saw the minister's response to our recommendations, there had been a requirement for evidence of 150 exposure incidents for volunteer firefighters in order for them to be eligible for the benefit arising from the deeming provisions. The department advised—

... it was necessary to ensure that there were clear linkages between the scope of the coverage and available data and research concerning relative exposure rates as firefighters and cancer incidence.

We totally agree with the department about needing evidence as the basis for rebuttable presumptive legislation. However, after what was an extensive inquiry, we did have some problems with the threshold of 150. We were unable to identify any scientific basis for the inclusion of the 150 exposure incidents as being the appropriate measure for exposure by volunteer rural firefighters. There is simply insufficient rigour in the record keeping of the department and of our volunteer rural fire brigades to be able to access the appropriate records to prove any number of exposure incidents. I state this with no disrespect to volunteer firefighters, but time and time again we heard from rural firefighters that the last thing they are interested in when they are about to go out fighting a fire or are coming back from one is filling in a piece of paper. That has to be addressed, because rebuttable presumptive legislation—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Furner): Order! Member for Bulimba, please hold on. Members, there is too much noise in the chamber. If you want to have conversations, please go outside.

Ms FARMER: We note that the department has made some strides in terms of improving record keeping. However, both the department and rural firefighters really must address the issue of record keeping in order to provide an evidence base and the committee made a strong recommendation about that. We also identified that much more needed to be done to define what an actual exposure is. I thank the minister for his attention to this issue. One of the many key differences between this bill and the private member's bill is around the issue of needing to provide an evidence base for volunteer fighters, in order that the presumptive legislation cannot be rebutted on their behalf. We were very concerned that the passing of this legislation not mean that volunteers will consider that it is their insurance against cancer. That is why we recommended that there be an independent committee established, comprising representatives perhaps from the Rural Fire Brigades Association, WorkCover and the medical

profession, to consider exposures and to assist in determining whether the rebuttable of claims was warranted. I thank the minister for also acknowledging that. I note that he said it was not required under legislation. We consider that to be one of the key ways in which volunteer firefighters can be protected.

As I said before, we are absolutely delighted that the minister has accepted our key recommendations. Unlike the private member's bill introduced by the member for Kawana, the new bill on which we will now be voting will be based on a thorough examination of the issues, genuine consultation and a responsible approach to the future based on the evidence received. Best of all, it will be good for firefighters and for workers in general.

I thank all of the stakeholders who went to so much trouble to submit evidence to our committee. I thank the committee members for their really quite detailed and careful deliberations. I thank the research director and staff who have supported us. It has been a massive undertaking to deliver the two reports. I also thank the departmental officers, some of whom are here with us tonight, for the enormous amount of work that they have done and for their dedication to doing the right thing. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mr CRANDON** (Coomera—LNP) (10.08 pm): I rise to make a contribution to the debate on the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2015 and the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation (Protecting Firefighters) Amendment Bill 2015. At the outset, I thank the secretariat for their efforts in pulling together all of the evidence, thoughts and ideas that the committee received from a wide range of participants. This was made more complex because we were considering two bills, some similar elements within those two bills and ultimately, of course, two separate reports.

My thanks also goes to my parliamentary colleagues from both sides of the House for their thoughtful consideration of the many issues. I think that, although we could not agree on many aspects, we were mindful of the seriousness of the issues—issues that affect many lives and many families right across Queensland. Ultimately, we were able to agree on one very, very important aspect of the bills—that is, that rural fireys deserve the same protection afforded to full-time and auxiliary firefighters. That was the position of the non-government members going into this report. I note that the government members accepted the evidence and supported us. In my view, there needs to be nothing more said on that aspect of the bill because I note the minister has accepted recommendation No. 2 of the committee's report on the government bill. Therefore, that is a great win for our hardworking and dedicated volunteer firefighters.

On the subject of that win, we put questions to the department in relation to the costs associated with that aspect of the legislation. We asked what would happen if we moved the 150 exposure incidents out. They came back with an estimate of \$15.2 million a year. We queried them further: 'Where on earth did you get the numbers from? What were the figures used?' The discussion went backwards and forwards.

I did a bit of a back-of-the-envelope calculation and said, 'What we are really talking about with this figure of \$15.2 million out of a very big WorkCover fund is turning our back on something like 42 firefighters each and every year.' If there were that many claims surely \$15.2 million is not a big expense. They said that it would be more complex than that and it would not be just a matter of taking the \$365,000 figure, I think it was, and dividing it into the \$15.2 million figure to come up with a number. They said it would be more complex than that and that there are more aspects to it. We asked them if they would bring that all back to us.

They came back with the very complex formula that they had used. They obviously did not give us all the detail of the complex formula. They came back and said it was more like 44 firefighters whom we would be turning our backs on for the sake of \$15.2 million. We have the back-of-the-envelope calculation of 42 versus their calculation of 44. Two more lives is very important. The point is that it is simply a calculation.

They made the point that they might be way out on the downside and they might be way out on the upside in the information that they provided to us. That means to me that we should turn the \$15.2 million into lives. That means to me that we should turn the \$15.2 million into people and say, 'Hang on a second, is it not worth \$15.2 million—or if it is double—to protect and provide compensation to the families, more often than not, of those firefighters who will perhaps ultimately lose their lives sadly to a horrendous disease?'

The committee made several other recommendations—a total of six, in fact. In particular, I refer to recommendation 1 of the report. I thank the minister for accepting this particular recommendation in part. Recommendation 1 states—

The Committee recommends that amendments be made to allow for the inclusion of additional diseases that maybe identified in the future.

Recommendation 5 states—

The Committee recommends that as a matter of priority, Queensland Emergency Services, implement a system of record keeping for firefighters, including volunteer rural firefighters, that tracks individual firefighter's exposure to incidents.

This was a very important recommendation. It may seem on the surface that recommendation 5 contradicts recommendation 2 where we recommend throwing out the 150 exposures to fires. We are saying in that recommendation that we should implement a system of record keeping that moves us forward. It is not the case. It is not contradictory at all. In fact, it is a prudent measure. It augments recommendation 2.

I thank the minister for accepting the recommendation. It puts the onus on the department to make the department responsible for implementing and maintaining a system of record keeping for all firefighters, not just the paid firefighters and auxiliary firefighters.

Why do we need a reliable system of record keeping? It has been alluded to on a couple of occasions already. This legislation is what is termed presumptive legislation. Presumptive legislation means if a firefighter contracts a cancer of a prescribed kind—primary site brain cancer, primary site bladder cancer, primary site kidney cancer, primary site non-Hodgkin lymphoma, primary leukaemia, primary site breast cancer, primary site testicular cancer, multiple myeloma, primary site prostate cancer, primary site ureter, primary site colorectal cancer or primary site oesophageal cancer—has been a firefighter for the relevant qualifying period for that cancer and during their employment has been exposed to the hazards of a fire scene, the firefighter's employment is taken to have contributed to the contraction of the disease for purposes of the workers compensation application.

That is the reason it is so important moving forward that we start to keep accurate records. The presumptive legislation is rebuttable where it can be proven that the cancer was not work related. Where would that lead us? First of all, it should be said that current record keeping leaves a lot to be desired. That is the case for all firefighters, but certainly the 36,000 rural firefighters. It is worst of all for rural firefighters.

We have some uncertainty going forward in terms of what has occurred in the past. With properly kept records, as time goes on the potential for rebuttal will lessen. If we implement—and remember it is the responsibility of the department to keep records—a proper system then it will reduce the potential for claims to be rebutted. It will give more certainty to all firefighters, including rural firefighters. Why put the onus on the department? The reason is simply this: if the department falls short in its responsibilities as the employer then it will lessen their capacity to rebut a claim.

I commend the rural firefighters for their superb effort in rallying their members to ensure that their voice was heard on this matter. Clearly, their evidence went a long way towards convincing the government members to support the proposal put forward by the LNP.

In concluding on this aspect of the bill, the other recommendations are worth reading into the record. Those recommendations have been supported either in part or fully by the minister. Recommendation 1 states—

The Committee recommends that amendments be made to allow for the inclusion of additional diseases that may be identified in the future.

Recommendation 3 states—

The Committee recommends that the legislation be amended to include the appointment of an independent committee or panel to be established to consider exposures and assist in determining whether rebuttal of claims are warranted.

That is incredibly important for the time being. That is incredibly important until we have that evidence from that record keeping process that we are talking about. It is incredibly important that we have that committee in place. That has been accepted in part by the minister.

Recommendation 4 states—

The Committee recommends that the department seek and incorporate additional scientific studies of exposures by firefighters, including volunteer rural firefighters.

Once again, it is incredibly important that we start to build on the knowledge base in relation to this.

I now turn to the matter of the changes proposed in the government bill to reinstate common law claims relating to impairment of zero to five per cent. I make the point that those claimants can still receive statutory claims. When the original legislation was put in place back in 2013, it did not mean that people with an impairment of zero to five per cent walked away with nothing. They still had the opportunity to make a statutory claim. That statutory claim is still in place, and I think the figure is something like up to \$365,000 so they were still able to make a statutory claim.

I was the chair of the committee that conducted the inquiry into the operation of Queensland's workers compensation scheme—the inquiry that has been alluded to more than once in this House today—and we produced report No. 28. That was in May 2013 after I think it was indicated 11 months of consideration. It was a long, hard slog. By the time you add all the annexures and what have you, it is about a 280-page document, but there is a lot of detail in those 280 pages as well. This was a five-yearly review which means that the next review is due in 2018. So in just a few years time we would be coming back to do a review of that particular legislation anyway. Every five years workers compensation has to be reviewed, so we are going to see it again in 2018. It will come back to haunt us again in some ways. It will possibly haunt the government because we will be able to measure the impact of this legislation on those reserves.

In that review the FAC did not support the changes that were subsequently put in place in a wideranging reform of the workers compensation scheme. It is important for us to remember that this was not just about one aspect of workers compensation; this was about the whole workers compensation scheme. We travelled far and wide, we spoke to all manner of people and we got a lot of information that we were able to input into the report.

There were 32 recommendations made. I need to correct the record. The chair of the committee indicated a short while ago that only a few of the recommendations were accepted by the attorney-general at the time. That is not correct. In fact, 20 of the 32 recommendations were supported by the attorney-general. That is a very important point. In fact, some of those recommendations related to the issue of the no-win, no-fee arrangements and the fifty-fifty rule. Those recommendations were accepted by the attorney-general, and those recommendations are worth reading into the record. Recommendation 28 stated—

The Committee recommends that the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice investigate the issues of 'no-win-no-fee' arrangements and the '50/50 rule' with a view to curtailing the speculative nature of some claims.

The government response stated—

Supported.

This recommendation has implications for personal injury proceedings generally and the Department will investigate this recommendation on the understanding that it may have implications beyond the workers' compensation scheme.

I just make the point that those recommendations were being considered by the previous government. This was because it was the committee's view that many of the speculative claims that were occurring would fall away. Why did we believe that? It was because of the evidence that we received. This, in the view of the committee, would have had a similar effect to the claims in the zero to five per cent range that were of a questionable nature and perhaps driven by the legal fraternity—the ones that were alluded to before that were out there with their placards supporting the workers because they had a little or maybe a big stake in the whole thing.

We had a number of legal practitioners who, for obvious reasons, were only prepared to speak off the record because they did not want to be targeted by their friends telling us that the no-win, no-fee arrangements and fifty-fifty rule were a major driver in speculative claims. The Attorney-General accepted those recommendations but indicated that a wider consideration regarding such things as motor vehicle claims et cetera, as I just said before, should be included. So it was on that basis that the committee chose not to recommend the zero to five per cent exclusion.

Let me fast forward to 2015 and this move by the industrial relations minister to undo the law. In light of the fact that nothing is being done by the minister regarding the no-win, no-fee arrangements and the fifty-fifty rule, it is something that he supported as a member of that committee. In fact, if I recall correctly—and I should remember this clearly—he was the deputy chair. So he supported back in 2013 to do something with this fifty-fifty rule and the no-win, no-fee arrangements, but he did not do anything about that this time around.

I am not able to support the wind back of the zero to five per cent claims based on the evidence that we have received and based on the fact that other aspects of the report back in 2013 are not being brought in to the current bill. I simply am not able to support it. The committee heard much evidence about the cost to unwind this legislation. Although some of the figures talk about \$90 million here and

\$90 million there—this is for the previous claims—and then \$184 million a year, it does not make sense that, if you have \$184 million a year going forward, it would be \$180 million for 1.7 years going backwards. It does not work. So my immediate desire was to do a few calculations of my own, and they are included in the report.

That immediate cost amounts to something like \$500 million—half a billion dollars—of a reserve of around \$1.7 billion. That is \$500 million that has not been part of the premium calculation. Remember, when the premiums were recalculated there was no suggestion that all of these changes were going to be made, so there was absolutely no way that this \$500 million could be incorporated in the calculation, so the \$1.20 premium is a furphy. It is not \$1.20 anymore—not if you take that \$500 million into consideration that it is going to cost the fund, based on my calculations, based on the information that has been provided by the department. That alone represents something like a 30 per cent reduction in the current reserves of the fund. So that means that the fund of \$1.7 billion goes down to \$1.2 billion—whack—straightaway this current financial year. Just to give you a bit more detail, on page 26 the committee comments—

The non-government Members are concerned that the \$90 million estimated cost for claims for injuries between 15 October 2013 and 31 January 2015, combined with the estimated cost of a further \$90 million for claims for the period 31 January 2015 to 30 June 2015 could be a significant underestimate of the actual cost. This concern is based on the department's advice that annual costs going forward will be in the order of \$184 million.

And so I go on. Those figures are on page 26. Go and have a look at them yourself and you will see where I have come up with that \$500 million figure. The department advised that, based on the five per cent return and certain other things, the fund would run out of excess reserves by 2019-20. So what does it mean? Simply put—I have a few pages to go but it does not look I am going to get there with 50 seconds to go.

Government members interjected.

Mr CRANDON: You could move a motion for me to speak further. In summary, we are looking down the barrel of a significant increase in premiums for the short term. We are looking at the potential to see claims grow significantly—well beyond those assumed in the government's calculations. In the end that means more pressure on business. More costs associated with employment means one of two things—fewer employees or increased costs of goods and services or a combination of both. Finally, I congratulate the minister on his adoption of the LNP proposal where he abandoned the 150 activities for rural fireys and I condemn him for not adopting the 2013 recommendations that he supported in opposition.

 **Mr CRAWFORD** (Barron River—ALP) (10.28 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2015. I would like to focus on the deemed disease provisions for firefighters. I am pleased that this government has acted swiftly to implement this election commitment to Queensland firefighters. I am very proud to be part of the Finance and Administration Committee which looked into this and provided the feedback we are hearing about tonight.

I am pleased that within its first six months of office this government has introduced the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill, which will provide Queensland firefighters with a greater certainty that they will receive workers compensation if they develop one of the 12 specific cancers. I will not read them out as members have already heard of them this evening.

I spent 21 years as a Victorian volunteer firefighter. From the age of about 14 I grew up on a farm. My father, the captain of the local brigade, said that I was tall enough to get on the truck and he sent me off. I spent the best part of my life, until 2008, between a number of different brigades. I understand what it is to be a volunteer firefighter. I understand the types of jobs volunteer firefighters attend. I was very pleased to be part of this committee that reviewed this issue.

In Victoria in 2011, the former Country Fire Authority chief officer, Mr Brian Potter, claimed that dozens of cases of cancer and other illnesses were linked to water contamination and chemical usage at the Victorian Country Fire Authority training site called Fiskville, near Ballarat. Mr Potter died of cancer in 2011 at age 70, and before he died he called on the government to do something about cancer in firefighters. In 2011 the federal government enacted its Commonwealth presumptive laws. Since then South Australia, Tasmania, Western Australia and the Northern Territory have introduced presumptive legislation. Now it is certainly Queensland's turn.

I spent many months at the Fiskville training site. That training site was probably a bit like parliament is to regional MPs. That training site closed in 2015, never to be reopened. I feel as though I am one of those firefighters who could easily have a ticking bomb inside. A number of my colleagues

from Victoria through that time have died of various diseases including cancer. I am very passionate and strong on this issue and want to see us do the right thing. I do not want this issue used as a political weapon, as I have heard over the last few months. This argument about covering firefighters is not about politics: it is about ensuring that our volunteer, career and auxiliary firefighters have what they need in their moment of need in diagnosis. The last thing we want is any firefighter undergoing probably the most stressful moment of their life, which is possibly the end stage of their life, with increased stress from family and having to try and negotiate their way through a legal minefield with a variety of information and opinions. This legislation will turn the onus back onto the department to prove that that firefighter did not get their cancer from the job or from exposure. I certainly welcome that.

In relation to the figure of 150, when I first read it I did run a highlighter across it and think, 'This will be a problem.' I was very pleased with the way the committee conducted itself during interviews. We spoke to a number of people from the department, from Queensland Fire and Emergency Services, a number of volunteer firefighters as well as people from WorkCover. There was quite a discrepancy in people's understanding of the exact types of incidents and exposure that volunteer firefighters attend. The simple answer is that there is no easy way to describe it. Smoke on the other side of the hill can be coming from anything—a grassfire, car fire, a hazardous materials fire, a house fire or whatever. There is a discrepancy in relation to making statements that rural firefighters only attend grassfires, because the reality is that they do not. They attend a fire in their area from a call that they receive. When they arrive, they do their best inside their limitations.

I understand and recognise that it is difficult to try and gauge what is and is not an exposure. I was pleased to see the Treasurer take up the committee's unanimous recommendation to remove the 150—and I know of a lot of campaigning to various members on that—but I wanted to see something established to create a robust process such that a volunteer firefighter receiving a diagnosis of cancer could undergo a process without being made to feel as though they were somehow automatically guaranteed—that just because you were a volunteer firefighter on the books of a brigade who was diagnosed with cancer you could simply walk up to the table and be written a cheque. I wanted a robust process that allowed the government to look at this on a case-by-case basis and at each particular firefighter's exposure—what they went to and how many times they went, to talk to people who had been there, who saw it and who had records about it—so that a decision could be made as to whether this person actually met that criteria. In relation to recommendation No. 3, this evening I was pleased to hear the Treasurer say that, while it would not be put into legislation, it was being acted upon in relation to the independent review panel. I know that WorkCover representatives who spoke to us at one of the hearings mentioned the same issue. I was very pleased to see that.

My message to the volunteer firefighter movement in Queensland is that that is the way forward for us—that if a volunteer firefighter gets that diagnosis that is the one-stop shop. I would like to see the process be more than just a review panel that decides whether one does or does not meet the criteria. I would like to see the panel assist that person through the process, which would not be a very nice one.

The incidence of cancer has been found to be eight per cent higher in male full-time firefighters than in the rest of the population, and it is more common in those who have worked in the service for more than 20 years. There are a number of firefighters—career, auxiliary and volunteer, such as me—who have put in in excess of 20 years service. All of the statistics and research we looked at clearly pointed to that. It is probably just that there is not good research to base information on, but research in relation to volunteer firefighters shows that across Australia they actually have a lower cancer rate than the population. I would like to see more work on that, and I think different universities across Australia will move on that one.

While firefighters have been entitled to receive compensation for latent onset diseases under the workers compensation legislation, it often takes much longer to process these claims in the current system than it does physical injury claims. It is always easy to process a claim when there is an arm or leg missing but it is very difficult to process and push through claims when it is something that could be proven otherwise. A good example is a firefighter who claims their cancer resulted from exposure at the scene but who was a smoker for 25 years. Hence, the idea of presumptive legislation should make this process a whole lot easier.

A simple statistic I have pulled out of my notes is that the average time taken to approve most injury claims is less than eight days, whilst latent onset injury claims made by firefighters have an average of 214 days to finalise. Anyone who has relatives who have had a cancer diagnosis knows that 214 days is certainly not suitable. For a claim to be successful, the claimant must prove on the balance

of probabilities that they were a worker employed by the employer at the time the event caused the injury. They must also prove that they have an injury or disease and that work was a significant contributing factor to causing the injury or disease. However, for latent onset injuries, the event is taken to be the worker's exposure to injury which can occur over a period of time. It is often difficult to prove medically that a particular exposure caused a particular cancer or disease to form, so we are working in an area which is very confusing at times. However, by introducing these provisions for the 12 specific cancers that were mentioned before by the deputy chair as a work related matter, this government is removing the burden from firefighters to prove that their cancer is a result of their work as a firefighter.

The amendments that the Treasurer mentioned before will apply to all active rural fire brigade members, and I have some very active ones in my patch up at Speewah on the Tablelands. I have had a number of conversations with some of the volunteers up there who have taken this one on very passionately. When I explained to them what my vision was in relation to the independent committee, they were quite appreciative of that and the work that the committee was doing for that. This is a good day for volunteer firefighters. It is a good day for career firefighters. I think Queensland is certainly taking the lead on this. When I compare the legislation we are putting through with what else is running in other jurisdictions, I think the Queensland legislation is by far the best. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Miss BARTON** (Broadwater—LNP) (10.42 pm): I rise this evening to make a contribution to the cognate debate on the workers compensation legislation before the House. At the outset, I acknowledge my fellow members of the Finance and Administration Committee. A lot of work was put in to both reports on the government's bill and the private member's bill. I acknowledge and thank not only my fellow committee members but also in particular the secretariat. I think all members of the committee would agree that Deb Jeffrey went above and beyond to make sure we were able to table reports into these particular bills. I would also like to acknowledge and thank the departmental officials who took the time to appear before the committee, and I acknowledge that they are here tonight. I also thank the hundreds of Queenslanders who took the opportunity to make submissions to the committee.

A number of issues are raised in both of these bills. I do not have an opportunity to canvass all of them tonight but I want to touch on a couple of them. The first one I want to touch on is the base premium the Treasurer was talking about. When the Treasurer introduced this bill and the department provided us with the briefing—and even in his second reading speech tonight—the Treasurer maintained that the base premium can be maintained at \$1.20. The reality is that the reason they are able to do that is the way they are going to drive down the solvency of the workers compensation scheme in Queensland.

Those of us who were in the House in the 54th Parliament know that the WorkCover premiums came down because of the work the LNP government did to make sure we could support business in Queensland. We understand that the cost to business is a very significant one and it prevents business from being able to grow and employ more people. The reality is that, when the Treasurer talks about the \$1.20 premium, he is in effect misleading the people of Queensland and he is misleading the businesses of Queensland. The Treasurer is not taking into account the loading that the individual companies will receive any time there is a common law claim, and the Treasurer is not taking into account the individual industry rates that have an impact.

WorkCover told the committee that, taking into account the less than five per cent common law claims that will be available if this legislation passes tonight—and I will get to that in a moment—their break-even point is \$1.36. During the second departmental briefing that we received, I asked WorkCover if they could explain exactly how they were able to show they could maintain the \$1.20 base premium for the next five years. They told me that, even though they had actuarial advice, it was commercial-in-confidence and they were unable to provide it to either the parliament of Queensland or the people of Queensland.

They talk about a government that wants to be open, accountable and transparent, but, quite frankly, when they are telling the businesses of Queensland that they are able to maintain a base premium at \$1.20 and then maintain that the reasons they can do it are commercial-in-confidence, I think that is a crock. I think it is offensive to the people of Queensland and I think it is offensive to the parliament. At the end of the day, we know that businesses will have to pay more for their base premiums. The break-even point will be \$1.36. The CCIQ provided evidence to our committee that for every one cent increase in premium that costs Queensland businesses \$10 million.

The other thing we heard from the departmental officials was that businesses in Queensland do not like volatility. They said that Queensland businesses would much rather have small incremental increases over a number of years than one significant increase after a number of years. The reason for

that is that they like to be able to budget for the occasional increase. Of course, businesses know that sometimes things are going to have to increase, and that includes their WorkCover premiums, but what we will see is the raiding of the solvency of the WorkCover scheme and we will see base premiums go up to \$1.36 in five years. If you assume that the CCIQ figures are correct, that will cost Queensland businesses \$160 million in five years.

This shows that this government does not care about small business, the employers and the fact that business confidence in this state is already lagging and that the efforts this government is undertaking are only serving to further decrease the confidence of business in this state. The contempt and the betrayal they show for small business in this state is absolutely disgraceful. I say to the small businesses in my community tonight that I will stand up for you because I want to make sure you are able to be viable going forward because I do not want you to see a significant increase in your WorkCover premiums in five years time. Unlike the Labor Party, unlike the government, this side of the House actually cares about small business and the sustainability and solvency of the WorkCover scheme.

One of the things that the government legislation is doing is removing the common law threshold of five per cent and under when it comes to claims. The reality is that there has been no evidence as to why this needs to happen. This is just an opportunity for the government to say thank you very much to their union mates who threw money in their coffers in the lead-up to the election. There is absolutely no reason for the government to get rid of the five per cent threshold. Combined with the drawing down on the solvency of the WorkCover scheme, we will see a further cost to business. It is a tautology that if you increase the possible number of claims—and those claims will increase by virtue of the fact that it is more open to people to avail themselves of the opportunity—and there are more claims, then of course the cost will go up. Where the cost goes up is potentially in the industry rate and in the loadings the individual businesses have to pay. It is like any of us; if we have an accident in our car, our car insurance goes up. It is a simple tautology, as I said. I cannot honestly see the reasoning for this other than to say thank you very much to the unions for the money that they threw into the coffers in the lead-up to the election.

One of the other things that is happening in the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill is the government is wanting to remove the opportunity for potential employers to look at the claims history of prospective employees. The reason for this is that apparently all employers are evil and all employers are going to use it to discriminate against people. However, the evidence we received from the employers and from the industry groups who took the opportunity to make submissions like the Housing Industry Association, the CCIQ and so many others is that they actually use this as an opportunity to make sure that the prospective employee is best suited for the job. They want to be able to employ someone who will be able to work with that company well over the long term. They have said in their submissions and their evidence to the committee that more often than not where there might be an indication of a pre-existing injury they use it as an opportunity to work with that prospective employee to make sure the workplace is right for them.

I want to move on now not only to the elements in the workers compensation and rehabilitation scheme and the government's bill about the presumptive legislation for firefighters but also the private member's bill that has been introduced by the member for Kawana. At the outset can I please place on the record my great thanks and acknowledgement not only to the member for Kawana but also to the former member for Bundaberg, Jack Dempsey. I know that the two of them worked very long and hard to make sure that we had this legislation here in the House today. I think it would be very remiss of us to not acknowledge the great work of the former member for Bundaberg when he was the minister responsible in this particular portfolio area. It would be remiss of us to not recognise the great work that he did and also to not recognise the great passion that that man had for emergency workers right across this state.

The other thing that I also want to put on the record is my great acknowledgement of not only the permanent firefighters at the Hollywell Fire Station in my electorate of Broadwater but also the Wasp Creek volunteers who I ordinarily acknowledge are based in the member for Coomera's electorate. However, they also support the community on South Stradbroke Island, which is in the great electorate of Broadwater. I would like to put on the record my thanks for and acknowledgement of the work they do.

I am of the view, as are all members of the LNP, that all firefighters are equal. Whether they are full-time, part-time, auxiliary or a volunteer, whether they rock up to a fire in a red truck or a yellow truck, they are equal. That is the message that the LNP sends to those people tonight. I think it is just

disgraceful that the government would have introduced legislation into this House which seeks to discriminate against volunteer firefighters who are prepared to put their lives on the line, who take time away from their families to receive no remuneration and to make sacrifices to protect their community. I think it is absolutely disgraceful that the government would seek to come into this House and introduce legislation that seeks to discriminate against those amazing volunteers who give up so much for their communities.

I welcome the news from the Treasurer tonight that he will accept the recommendation of the Finance and Administration Committee that the 150 exposure incidents will be removed. It shows that the Labor members of this committee were prepared to listen to common-sense evidence. It shows that the Labor members of this committee were prepared to actually stand up and fight on the basis of the evidence that we saw. There was no evidence presented to our community as to why the 150 were there in the first place. It was an arbitrary number that was just plucked out of the air. There was no reason for it. There was no evidence presented to the committee; it was just an arbitrary number that was plucked out of thin air.

What we have seen tonight is a government shamed into adopting the LNP's recommendation. They know that if they say to the volunteers that they are not equal, that they are not worthy of the same treatment as any other firefighter, they will be absolutely shamed in their communities, and so they should be because it is absolutely disgraceful that they would treat the volunteers of this state with such contempt. I know that all members on this side of the House very much welcome the government backing down and accepting the recommendation of the LNP.

There are a couple of things that I did not necessarily agree with in the Finance and Administration Committee's report. In particular, I want to touch on recommendation No. 5, which recommends that as a matter of priority the Queensland Fire and Emergency Services implement a system of record keeping for firefighters, including volunteer rural firefighters, that tracks individual firefighters' exposure to incidents. Certainly there was a significant amount of evidence that came before the committee which shows that there is a problem with record keeping. I am sure that the representatives of the QFES who are here tonight would acknowledge that there has been a problem with record keeping in the past.

My issue with this particular recommendation is the way that it puts the onus on the Queensland Fire and Emergency Services to come in over the top of the Rural Fire Brigade. My personal view is that that kind of culture change needs to come from within. I absolutely accept that something needs to be done about record keeping. I am sure that the rural fireys would very much accept that, too. Those rural fireys who made submissions to the committee and who provided evidence to the committee acknowledged that there is a problem with record keeping. They also acknowledged that sometimes the way these particular brigades are organised does not make it very easy for record keeping to be done in one particular way.

My concern about this particular recommendation is that it is potentially doomed to fail. I am concerned that there is going to be one prescriptive way of doing it. I would much rather see the QFES work with the RFBAQ to try to come up with a couple of different ways of making sure that the record-keeping system is improved. As I say, I am sure we would all absolutely acknowledge that something needs to be done. I just have some concerns about the prescriptive way in which this recommendation is going to do that. Unfortunately, I was outvoted on the committee. The member for Coomera did suggest that I could sleep on it and have a think about it, but in the words of Margaret Thatcher, this lady is not for turning. I very much stood my ground and dug in my heels because this was something that I was particularly passionate about.

At the end of the day what we have seen is a government come into this House to introduce legislation that will make the cost of doing business more expensive for businesses, for small businesses, across the state. What we have seen today is a government come into this House that claims to be open, accountable and transparent and tell the business community of Queensland that the actuarial advice they have that shows that they can maintain WorkCover premiums at \$1.20 for five years is actually commercial-in-confidence. It struck me as rather ironic because they do not want businesses to rely on it.

It is perfectly okay for the Treasurer to come into this House and say, 'It is okay, we will maintain your premiums at \$1.20 for the next five years,' but, if we release the actuarial advice that shows how the government is going to do it so the business community might actually be able to have confidence in how they are going to do it, that might actually give employers a little bit of an idea about how things

are going to happen and we cannot do that. As I said, I think it is an absolute disgrace that we would hide from the business community. As we know, the break-even point is \$1.36. It is simple logic that at some point we are going to have to hit the break-even point, particularly when we see the solvency reduce from 170 per cent to near 120 per cent.

I also have significant concerns about what is going to happen to the cost of premiums for businesses where common law claims are made. As the member for Kawana and the shadow minister said earlier—and this is something I have myself said in the House—government is not the creator of jobs in this state; business is the creator of jobs. Government creates the environment and provides the framework for business to be able to create jobs and growth.

What we have seen tonight, and what we will see if this legislation passes, is that this government does not care about business creating jobs. This government does not care about confidence in business at all. This government does not care about the cost to small business because we have seen this government come in and say to small business, 'No, do not worry. We do not care about what the cost is to you. We are just going to increase your premiums.' Every single member of the government in this House should hang their heads in shame when they go back to their electorates and tell the small businesses in their electorates that they are going to increase their base cover premiums by 16 cents.

Do not worry, members of the government, we will make sure those small businesses in your community know exactly what you have done. It is the LNP in Queensland that wants to make sure that we have a viable WorkCover scheme that ensures that workers are protected, because that is absolutely important. Workers who are injured should have protections afforded to them, and nobody disputes that whatsoever. But what we want to see is a competitive scheme that means that businesses in Queensland are able to thrive and grow. What we have heard this government say is that they do not give a damn. They do not care about small business, and they do not care about jobs growth in this state.

The other thing that we have seen is that this government says that really they do not care about rural fireys and they do not care about the hundreds of thousands of volunteers, regardless of whether or not they are rural firefighters, surf lifesavers or volunteers in policing. They do not care about the volunteers in this state because if they did, they would not treat them with such contempt that they would seek to come into this House and tell them they are not worthy of equal protection. It is an absolute disgrace, and every single member of this government should hang their head in shame because the message they are sending to the people of Queensland is that they just do not care. They do not care about workers, they do not care about employers and they do not care about volunteers. At the end of the day that scares me, because what we are going to see over the next few years of this government is that business confidence will continue to sink and the Treasurer will continue to fail. We will see WorkCover premiums go up and we will see businesses suffer at the hands of the terrible decisions that have been made by this government.

Tonight I urge all members of this House to reject wholeheartedly and absolutely the provisions of the government's bill which will seek to destroy businesses and jobs in Queensland and treat volunteers like they are second-class citizens, which is exactly what they are doing.

 **Mr PEGG** (Stretton—ALP) (11.02 pm): I rise to speak in favour of the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2015. I understand that many members wish to make a contribution to this debate, and therefore I wish to speak specifically about the removal of thresholds for common law claims, the removal of the right of prospective employers to obtain a prospective employee's workers compensation claims history summary and the deemed diseases provisions for firefighters.

In my first speech in this House I spoke about the inequity and unfairness that currently exists with the workers compensation scheme in this state. We have heard a few contributions so far from the members opposite. We have heard about the rights of working people and their families being reduced to dollars and cents, and we heard the contribution from the member for Broadwater about how government members should hang their heads in shame. I am certainly not going to hang my head in shame for standing up for working people and their families and making sure that the most vulnerable in our community are stood up for in this place—no way! In my first speech I said that I very much look forward to the changes that were made by the previous government being reversed and fairness restored for injured workers in this state. This bill will reverse those changes and restore the fairness that I spoke about in my first speech.

As I said in my first speech, it was while working as a solicitor that I came to fully realise the importance of having an effective system of workers compensation in this state. The thresholds that were introduced by the previous government have restricted the ability of those who are injured at work to make common law damages claims. We are talking about people who have been injured at work through no fault of their own and who have had their access to compensation severely curtailed. Those most likely to suffer an injury during the course of their employment are naturally those workers who are in manual occupations. I know from my professional background that suffering an injury at work can be devastating at both a professional and personal level. Workplace injuries are also devastating for the injured person and their families. This is particularly the case when there are dependent children involved. It can cause a great deal of financial and emotional distress to the injured person and their family.

I have previously spoken in this House about the phone call I received from one of my former clients who lived in my local area during the 2012 election campaign. A few years earlier he was at work and suffered a back injury. He came to our firm and we worked together to manage his case and help him get compensation for his injury, which was serious enough that he was barred from continuing in that type of work. After he received compensation my role as his solicitor ended. I had not seen or heard from him in many years. Until he called me that day, I did not fully realise how much the support and compensation at that time had helped. It gave him and his family some financial breathing space so he could retrain into a new occupation. He could support his family while he retrained and then he found employment in a new field. Because had he that breathing space he was once again at a point where he could support his family, earn a decent living and make a contribution to his local area.

That injury was not assessed as being above the five per cent impairment threshold, so under the current scheme he could have lost that support. I do not know what would have happened: maybe he would have worked on in pain every day; maybe he would have given up. The ability to pursue a common law claim gives people in this situation some breathing room. It gives them some time to re-evaluate how they can participate meaningfully in the community. I have absolutely no doubt in my mind that the removal of these thresholds will assist Queenslanders to retrain into other occupations. It will support families in a time of great need, it will keep people and families together, and I have absolutely no doubt in my mind that it will save lives as well.

What those opposite fail to understand is the difference between impairment and disability and that the level of impairment affects people in different ways. It is something they seem completely unable to comprehend. While we all know that the worst could potentially happen, I think it is human nature to think—or at least hope—that it will not happen to us. My experience with people who have sustained workplace injuries is that it can take a long time to adjust both mentally and physically to the restrictions. Of course, the ridiculousness of the impairment threshold is the fact that it does not apply to other injury claims in this state. There is no threshold to make a claim if you suffer an injury in a motor vehicle accident and there is no threshold if you suffer an injury in a public place. The only place in Queensland where these thresholds apply is in the workplace. The former government discriminated against the working men and women of Queensland, and it seems that those opposite want to continue that discrimination—

Mr Bennett interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Grace): Order! Member for Burnett, your interjections are not being accepted, so can we please give the member for Stretton a go.

Mr PEGG: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I also wanted to make a contribution about the aspect of this bill that removes the ability of a prospective employer to obtain the worker's claims history summary of a prospective employee. As things currently stand, a prospective employer can access this information lawfully. Putting aside the very obvious issues of privacy in granting a third-party access to such records, I think it is important to look at the utility of, and limitations on, the information that is provided.

Essentially what these summaries provide is a list of injuries. The only information provided is a short injury description and the date of the injury. There is no information on the severity of the injury or what kind of medical treatment was involved. There is no information about the ongoing work capacity of that particular person. In addition to the obvious limitations on the scope of the information provided, I think it is also very important to note that these statements only provide a list of injuries under the workers compensation scheme in Queensland. They do not provide any details of work injuries that may have occurred interstate or overseas and they do not provide details of any injuries that may have

been established outside of the workplace in any jurisdiction. I cannot see how this information is of any utility to prospective employers, and in fact I think it would be very dangerous for this information to be relied upon for any indication of whether a particular person was physically capable of undertaking a particular job. Of course there are avenues available to prospective employers should they have doubts about the capabilities of a prospective employee to undertake a particular job. This is called a pre-employment medical assessment, and there is nothing in this bill that prevents that from occurring.

Most concerning of all to me was the evidence provided by a number of submitters to the committee that under the existing provisions some workers are not reporting workplace injuries due to the fear that such reporting could subsequently be used against them. We need to focus on creating safe workplaces where Queenslanders come home safe, not fostering a culture where injuries and incidents are not reported.

Finally, I want to also make a comparison of benefits paid to injured firefighters under the private member's bill and the government's bill. The government in its pre-election commitments made a clear commitment to introduce deemed disease provisions for full-time permanent firefighters and part-time auxiliary firefighters employed by Queensland Fire and Emergency Services and volunteer firefighters of the Rural Fire Service Queensland. This will provide certainty of entitlement and improved accessibility to workers compensation for firefighters.

The government is also committed to ensuring all firefighters, regardless of whether they are permanent, auxiliary or volunteer, have equal workers compensation entitlements. The deemed disease provisions in the bill alleviate the burden of proof that current and former firefighters are under to demonstrate that latent onset cancers they develop are a result of their work related fire exposure. The provisions do this by automatically deeming these 12 specified cancers to be work related for firefighters providing they meet the respective qualifying period of active service. These deemed disease provisions entitle all eligible firefighters to statutory compensation. This includes weekly payments, medical treatment, rehabilitation expenses, lump sum and additional lump sum compensation, and lump sum entitlements for terminal latent onset injuries.

In addition, under the government's bill, full-time and auxiliary firefighters have access to common law damages. The act currently provides that a contract of insurance for volunteer firefighters excludes coverage for common law damages. The government's bill includes provisions that ensure that eligible rural fire brigade members and volunteer firefighters will now have access to common law damages for a specified cancer. This means that under the government's bill full-time auxiliary and volunteer firefighters will be treated equally in terms of coverage and entitlements.

The private member's bill fails to make the necessary changes to section 12 of the act to provide access to common law damages for rural firefighters and volunteer firefighters. This means that volunteer firefighters will not have the same rights as their permanent and auxiliary cousins. The bill introduced by the member for Kawana also provides compensation entitlements to persons not engaged in active firefighting duties or to persons who have not been exposed to fire incidents. In other words, everyone who has been employed or volunteered for a fire brigade on the front line or back of office will have coverage even if they have not been engaged in active firefighting. If passed, this would mean that WorkCover would, in effect, have to provide a group of the community who have no increased cancer risk with medical and income protection for cancers that are prevalent in the general community.

This aspect of the bill will significantly increase the cost of the provisions which would, in turn, significantly increase premium costs for QFES—a cost that would eventually be passed on to the taxpayers of Queensland. It would also lead to this entitlement becoming a general feature of the workers compensation scheme that could increase scheme costs and potentially reduce Queensland's competitive advantage.

It is quite clear that the private member's bill is a populist attempt to buy favour and try to buy its way into government. It is a flawed bill. The government's bill provides access to the same entitlements for eligible firefighters regardless of whether they are full-time firefighters, auxiliary firefighters, rural brigade volunteers, volunteer firefighters or wardens. It is fair, it is considered and it is reasonable. I commend the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2015 to the House.

 **Mr WEIR** (Condamine—LNP) (11.13 pm): As a member of the Finance and Administration Committee, I rise tonight to make a contribution to the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2015. The amendments proposed in this bill would reinstate common

law claims for claims under six per cent, provide additional compensation for claims not eligible for common law claims between 15 October 2013 and 31 January 2015, and introduce provisions for firefighters diagnosed with one of 12 diseases related to their period of active firefighting service.

I turn to clause 6 and the amendment of section 237. This amendment would remove the requirement for a worker needing to have an assessed degree of permanent impairment of more than five per cent to pursue compensation under the common law. The amendment was supported by the submissions provided by the unions. However, it was opposed by business industry groups concerned about the rising costs to WorkCover. Some of the union submitters cited cases of workers who have an impairment of less than five per cent and are unable to continue in the workplace. The Queensland Nurses' Union stated that, even where the impairment is assessed at zero, some members remain unable to continue in their role as inherent requirements of nursing work include manual handling.

The Australian Lawyers Alliance spoke of injured workers with impairments assessed at five per cent who are no longer able to work due to their injury. There have been instances where these workers have had to change careers because of their injury, have had extended time off to recover or have returned to work in a part-time capacity or with restricted duties. The Australian Lawyers Alliance position is that all Queensland employees deserve access to common law rights.

The Civil Contractors Federation considers that claims in the zero to five per cent category are more appropriately dealt with through the statutory no-fault system instead of through the courts. They believe this would ensure that the focus for injured workers and employers is on rehabilitation and getting workers back to work as soon as it is safe to do so rather than how much they can be compensated for their injury. The Australian Industry Group stated that the ability to access common law damages often leads to employers experiencing difficulties with engaging injured workers in the rehabilitation process and returning to work in a timely manner.

The Chamber of Commerce & Industry Queensland advised that, when surveyed in 2012, 81 per cent of Queensland businesses supported the introduction of a threshold to reduce access to common law. Some submitters had concerns that WorkCover costs will be increased because of these changes. The department advised that reinstating common law provisions for injuries of five per cent and under would result in an estimated 1,800 additional injured workers with access to common law with an average payment of \$110,000.

Industry submitters expressed concern about the behaviour of some legal companies which advertise a no-win, no-fee provision and were apprehensive about the five per cent impairment compared to the five per cent disability. The non-government members do not support this amendment as it will inevitably lead to premium rises which in turn increase the cost to business and will not encourage employers to engage one more worker. In fact, it would discourage employment.

I turn to clause 11. This amendment would insert a new chapter 32 with regard to workers injured before 31 January 2012. The department advised this amendment would establish the ability to provide additional compensation to workers impacted by the common law threshold between 15 October 2013 and 31 January 2015. The department stated that there were 5,912 claims that were assessed below six per cent for the period and approximately 2,700 claims that could go before common law, with a cost to the scheme of approximately \$90 million. Any worker who has accepted a lump sum payment in this period would be deemed to have finalised their claim.

The Queensland Law Society in its submission stated it believes the retrospective aspects in the bill should be increased to cover workers in this position. A number of the industry submissions expressed concern regarding the retrospectivity features of this bill, stating that no business can operate competitively when laws can be brought in designed to catch up for the past. The non-government members do not support this amendment, believing that it is unfair to impose a financial burden on any business retrospectively.

Clause 30 would remove section 571D which allows employers to apply to the regulator for a copy of a prospective worker's claims history. The union submissions once again strongly supported this amendment. The Queensland Nurses' Union suggested that the information was being misused by some employers and had resulted in some nurses and midwives being reluctant to pursue a workers compensation claim for fear they may damage future employment prospects. The CFMEU stated that it had received complaints from some of its members stating that they had been unsuccessful in gaining employment due to information provided to a prospective employer indicating the worker was unsuitable because of having submitted a workers compensation claim.

Hall Payne Lawyers were supportive of the amendments. A number of industry groups provided submissions opposing the removal of section 571D. The Civil Contractors Federation acknowledged that removing this section would leave an employer once again subject to workers moving from employer to employer and making claims for what may have been a pre-existing injury. The Ai Group stated that the existing provision had allowed employers to employ and manage their new employees with the best work health and safety practice by having access to appropriate information about pre-existing health issues. The Chamber of Commerce & Industry Queensland expressed a similar view. The department advised that it has received a total of 26,977 requests up to June 2015, with the vast majority of these coming from labour hire companies. The non-government members, whilst acknowledging that there are some unscrupulous employers out there, are of the view that employers should have access to prior claims history information to ensure that new employees are not placed in a role where there is a risk of aggravating a pre-existing injury.

I now turn to the cognate debate on the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2015 and the private member's bill introduced by Jarrod Bleijie, the shadow minister for police, fire, emergency services and corrective services—the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation (Protecting Firefighters) Amendment Bill 2015. I intend to address the two bills broadly and emphasise the main points that the committee identified during the committee process.

The committee has recommended a number of amendments which I will speak about and which were supported by the whole committee. The central difference in the two bills was a recommendation in the government bill that required rural firefighters to attend a minimum of 150 events over a five-year period to be eligible for compensation for identified cancers as a result of firefighting. Auxiliary and full-time firefighters are protected by presumptive legislation to cover the 12 identified cancers that firefighters are at a higher risk of developing above the average population. This legislation will be broadened to cover our rural and volunteer firefighters. Presumptive legislation has been developed primarily for those diseases where there is a gradual or long-term onset of illness or disease and where the causal link may not be clear-cut. These presumptive laws were developed in order to relieve the employee of a lengthy process, particularly when the employee is in immediate need of benefits and compensation.

Under the general workers compensation arrangements, the onus is on firefighters with cancer to pinpoint an event which caused their illness. This means that the burden of proof moves from the employee to the employer to demonstrate that the condition was not as a result of the claimant's occupation. Employers still have rebuttal provisions which enable them to deny benefits if it is proven the illness was not employment related. The federal Senate report as part of its fair protection for firefighters bill in 2011 stated—

Given the quantity and quality of evidence presented, the committee is confident that a link between firefighting and an increased incidence of certain cancers has been demonstrated beyond doubt.

The government's amendment would see rural firefighters have to attend 150 events before becoming eligible for compensation whilst full-time firefighters are covered from the first event—as opposed to the private member's bill, which allows all firefighters equal conditions from the first event. All submitters apart from the United Firefighters Union of Australia were supportive of the private member's bill. The majority of these submissions considered that the additional requirement for attendance of at least 150 exposure incidents by volunteer firefighters was discriminatory.

The Rural Fire Brigades Association of Australia advised that it considered that the proposed amendments are based on pay status and not upon service delivery. It further stated that attracting and retaining volunteers is one of its greatest challenges and if the value of volunteers is seen as less than that of a paid firefighter it is a guaranteed way to discourage new members. The Rural Fire Brigades Association also noted that the South Australian government had proposed to include 150 exposures in its legislation. However, this had been reduced to one exposure. It went on to state that there were no scientific facts to support the 150 exposure amendment and believed it is based on a willingness to pay rather than fact. The Firefighter Cancer Foundation of Australia also stated that it has been unable to find any science that supports a threshold of 150 or more exposure events.

Record keeping across the rural fire brigade was raised many times and appears to vary from average to almost nonexistent and it would be very difficult to prove that many rural firefighters had attended the required 150 events, and indeed many events seemed to go unrecorded. The department advised that the rural fire brigades' manual business rule relating to reporting of incidents is being changed to reflect the requirement of rural fire brigades to submit the previously optional form, naming individual volunteers who attend an incident.

To ensure that claims are not rebutted, record keeping will have to improve to prove that the claimant is an active firefighter. Simply being a member of the brigade will not be enough, as there are many members of the rural firefighters who have never actually attended a fire but act in a support role, whether it be in communications or making cups of tea and sandwiches. This would also ensure that some members of the public do not simply join the rural brigade as a cheap form of insurance just in case they contract cancer later on in their lives. The committee notes that this was a recommendation in the Malone review conducted by the former LNP government. One would hope that this insurance is not called upon very often, but we owe it to our volunteers to make the process as flawless as possible and not easily rebutted.

The role of a rural firefighter is not just about putting out grassfires. There are many old farm rubbish dumps across the country and they can contain old poison drums, batteries and even asbestos and a firefighter could find themselves fighting a fire and being exposed to very toxic smoke. In this day and age, unfortunately it is hard to predict what may be in that old abandoned car or that old lean-to shed that is hidden away in the bush. It may well have a meth lab in it. The rural brigades in country areas are often the first on the scene at car accidents and house and shed fires. They do not have the protective clothing and oxygen masks that the auxiliary brigades have access to. The least we can do is to provide them with the comfort of knowing that, should the worst happen, we have made provisions that give them and their families some comfort and support.

The committee also believes that an independent committee should be established comprising representatives from the Rural Fire Brigades Association, WorkCover and the medical profession to consider exposures and assist in determining whether rebuttal of claims are warranted. The committee has recommended a number of amendments to the government bill and I would urge all members to support these recommendations. Rural firefighters and the general public have been very supportive of these changes. Let them know that their voices have been heard. In closing, I want to thank the research director and staff for all of the work they did in helping to prepare this report.

 **Hon. SM FENTIMAN** (Waterford—ALP) (Minister for Communities, Women and Youth, Minister for Child Safety and Minister for Multicultural Affairs) (11.28 pm): I am very pleased to speak on the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. As an employment lawyer who assisted many workers to fight for their rights to fair compensation after being injured at work, I believe this day cannot come soon enough. I know that my friend and colleague the member for Sunnybank shares this view and has been a strong advocate for removing the injury impairment threshold for injured workers, and I thank him for his advocacy on this very important issue.

It is core to Labor's belief that workers should be kept safe, have strong representation and be compensated when they are injured at work. It was core to the LNP's beliefs that workers and their representatives could not be trusted and should have their rights limited. It is little wonder that workers rejected this attack at the ballot box.

The former government's changes in 2013 to introduce injury impairment thresholds saw the legal rights of up to 60 per cent of the state's injured workers stripped away. It is worth remembering that the former LNP-dominated parliamentary committee, which undertook its own extensive review of the state's workers compensation scheme, recommended against the introduction of impairment thresholds.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Grace): Order! Members, I know the hour is late. Let us settle down. Member for Kawana, if you would take your seat properly, please, and cease bantering across the chamber. The minister has the call.

Ms FENTIMAN: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. The former attorney-general ignored this advice and pushed the changes through regardless, to the detriment of many injured workers.

Mr Bleijie interjected.

Ms FENTIMAN: No. I was an employment and industrial relations lawyer. Get it right, Jarrod. Prior to these changes, Queensland had one of the best workers compensation schemes in the country—a scheme that was both fair for workers and employers. It was a financially strong scheme with low premiums and fair access to compensation for injured workers. In 2014 that changed with the introduction of thresholds. That was a change that was not only unfair for injured workers but also completely unnecessary, given WorkCover's strong financial position and the advice of the former LNP government's own parliamentary committee.

There are so many instances of injuries assessed between zero to six per cent impairment that mean some workers may never work again or may be forced to change careers as a result of their injury or are only able to go back to work in a limited capacity. Tonight, I would like to just tell one story.

John, a fitter and turner, was injured in February last year—months after thresholds were introduced. He was working as a coal wagon maintainer at the time of his injury. John was injured while attempting to remove an automatic coupling weighing 200 kilos from a coal wagon. His dominant right hand became caught and was crushed against the corner of the wagon.

After the accident, John's employer performed an internal investigation and developed a clear work method instruction in performing this task and changed the way the task was going to be done in future to prevent this from happening again. This response to improved work safety practice from the employer is to be welcomed. But for John, because of the LNP's changes, the story is not so great. He suffered a severe crush injury to his right finger that required amputation. He was assessed at five per cent impairment for his injury and received zero per cent impairment for scarring.

John has now returned to work, but he is concerned about his job security and long-term employment prospects as he is now restricted in his ability to perform his work on account of the injury he sustained. He continues to have great difficulty in being able to grip levers of machinery and tools to do his job as well as difficulty undertaking tasks requiring fine motor skills. The site of his injury is also hypersensitive, which means that he has to undertake great care in handling or lifting materials. His hand fatigues easily and this makes him less productive. However, despite the fact that John was injured in an unsafe workplace, he was not eligible to seek damages.

Given that previously Queensland had a strong and stable workers compensation scheme, there can be no other reason for this change than ideology. I encourage all of those members opposite to rethink their past mistakes on this issue, to hear the voices of the Queensland workers who said that they went too far and restore these rights.

 **Mr KRAUSE** (Beaudesert—LNP) (11.34 pm): Tonight, I also would like to tell a story about a gentleman who was affected by the legislation that is under consideration here tonight. I rise to speak in favour of the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation (Protecting Firefighters) Amendment Bill 2015. When I refer to the gentleman who was affected by the bills that we are talking about tonight, I want to pay tribute to this man who was previously a constituent of mine. His name was Glenn Sippel. Unfortunately, Glenn died on 15 September 2014 of mesothelioma. Around the time of his retirement from the QFES, some six months before his death, Glenn said in a newspaper article that his main aim was to go out and do the job, bring the boys home safe, do the paperwork and go home.

Glenn Sippel was a firefighter who served my community for 43 years as an auxiliary firefighter. He was a man who was revered by the community and they mourned his loss. Unfortunately, when Glenn contracted mesothelioma he was unable to benefit from the provisions of the legislation put forward in the LNP's bill tonight. That is the presumptive legislation that we are talking about where people who have served as firefighters for a certain amount of time—and Glenn served for 43 years before he contracted mesothelioma—will not have to contest a WorkCover claim in order to access workers compensation.

I know, as does the member for Burnett, that Glenn's family and Glenn himself were deeply distressed by the fact that they had to contract lawyers and make their case to WorkCover in order to access workers compensation. As this all unfolded last year, I spoke to the then attorney-general and the premier about the matter. Partly as a result of those representations I was extraordinarily glad that, late last year, the then government announced that we would be introducing this presumptive legislation to change the WorkCover Act so that firefighters who have served our state for so long will be able to access the WorkCover compensation scheme if they contract an asbestos related disease. That is the effect of the bill that was introduced by the member for Kawana earlier this year. I commend the member for introducing that bill. I table some documents in relation to this matter.

Tabled paper: Media article, undated, titled 'Obituary, Funeral for a friend' [[1105](#)].

Tabled paper: Article from the *Fassifern Guardian*, dated 17 September 2014, titled 'A man devoted to family and community' [[1106](#)].

Glenn Sippel was simply a magnificent firefighter for the area that I live in around Boonah. But there are many other firefighters and many other emergency services personnel in Queensland who will benefit from this legislation. I am extraordinarily proud that it was the LNP government that announced the change in policy and that it is the LNP that has introduced this bill to extend the presumptive legislation to all people who serve as firefighters for a certain amount of time.

Can I also say that having the provisions in the bill extended to rural firefighters is an extraordinary step. It is one that only came about because of the pressure that was brought to bear by the opposition and the LNP. The government members opposite were quite prepared to leave the rural fighters hanging out there without any protection at all. I do not know why the government members discriminate against rural firefighters.

Why do they hate rural firefighters so much? They were dragged kicking and screaming to a position where they are extending the same protection to rural firefighters. Rural firefighters defend 93 per cent of this state from bushfire. In fact, extending the protection to all firefighters was not even the idea of those opposite anyway. It was the LNP's policy position last year that has brought about this change. I commend the finding of the committee that examined this bill that I hope the government will accept tonight. I believe they are going to.

Mr Millar: They should.

Mr KRAUSE: They should indeed. It will extend the presumptive legislation protection to rural firefighters. The concept that you have to visit 150 fires as a rural firey to be protected by this legislation is a furphy.

Mr Millar: It is an insult.

Mr KRAUSE: It is an insult, member for Gregory. We all know that asbestos exposure can happen on one occasion. If the circumstances are wrong for a particular individual, that person can develop an asbestos related disease. Rural firefighters deserve protection just as much as auxiliary and other firefighters. We have a lot of rural firefighters in my electorate of Beaudesert, from Aratula in the west to Beechmont in the east and many, many rural fire brigades in between. I know that they will all appreciate the fact that, if they go to a fire now and they unfortunately in the future develop an asbestos related disease, they will be automatically covered by WorkCover legislation which protects them and will give their family comfort in the process that goes forward from there.

Glenn Sippel developed mesothelioma in April last year. He received the diagnosis only a month after he retired. I know that if this legislation had been in place at that time it would have been of great comfort to his family. They had great plans to travel Europe, to caravan Australia. Unfortunately those plans were cut short by this terrible disease. Asbestos related diseases are a curse. All governments of all persuasions should do more to try to prevent people developing these diseases.

I commend the government for accepting the recommendation of the committee. I commend the LNP government and the attorney at the time for listening to the concerns that were in the community about the WorkCover legislation and the fact that people affected by asbestos related disease were forced to go through essentially a litigious process to have their claim covered. I support the LNP's bill put before the parliament tonight. I cannot support the government's bill as a whole. Like many things that this government has done, it is bad for the economy, it is bad for jobs, it is bad for growth. It will send WorkCover premiums up over time. The government is forcing WorkCover to draw down on its reserves to accommodate the policy changes in this bill tonight and that will lead to higher premiums for all small businesses. This is essentially a tax on jobs that the government is introducing through its bill tonight and we should oppose that because this parliament should be about creating jobs for people, not taking them away, and this bill will cost job for Queenslanders.

 **Hon. JR MILLER** (Bundamba—ALP) (Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services and Minister for Corrective Services) (11.44 pm): I rise in support of this bill. This bill delivers on the Palaszczuk government's commitment to restore fairness and balance to the state's workers compensation scheme. Importantly, it amends the act to allow a firefighter who contracts one of 12 specified cancers to have that cancer deemed to be work related for workers compensation purposes where they meet the required qualifying period of active firefighting service.

The Palaszczuk government has listened to firefighters across the state. We listened to their concerns about the requirement for volunteer firefighters to attend 150 exposure events. That is why we are introducing an amendment to the bill during the consideration stage of the debate to omit this additional requirement.

An opposition member: Did you listen to them?

Mrs MILLER: I take that interjection. Yes, we did listen to them. This means they will be treated in the same way as active permanent and auxiliary firefighters. These provisions will apply to firefighters diagnosed on or after 15 July 2015. The bill also introduces a new entitlement for volunteer fireys. Eligible active volunteer fireys who contract one of the 12 specified cancers and have their statutory claim determined using these deemed disease provisions will be entitled to access common law damages. This means they will not only have the same coverage as permanent and auxiliary firefighters but also have the same entitlements. It is about fairness and balance.

If I were asked for a word that best sums up the spirit of a firefighter, I would not hesitate in saying that they are courageous. Our firefighters show courage every time they are called on to help the community. Whether it is battling bushfires or house fires, conducting swiftwater rescues or helping out

in motor vehicle accidents, they are there for their communities when disaster strikes. I saw it in Mount Isa when they had to deal with that dreadful explosion in the most tragic of circumstances. There they showed me that courage is not a thing but a quality, something that all firefighters share no matter where they live in this state. They are at the front line when times are tough. Their job is not nine to five. Their job is often dangerous and undertaken in difficult conditions. Sadly, sometimes they face the human side of tragedies. That is when our firefighters truly show the depth of their courage, not only to the community but to their families and loved ones when they return home after a tough day on the job. They are there for their communities when they are needed most and for that we owe them a great debt of gratitude.

When I visited Mount Isa the afternoon of that dreadful tragedy I missed the official opening of the new Severnlea West Fire Station. My colleague Mark Furner stepped in and opened the fire station in my place and I would like to thank the member for doing so. That new fire station is also a testament to the courage and the fighting spirit of our fireys. The \$70,000 facility was jointly funded by a \$25,000 station construction grant from the Rural Fire Service Queensland, a \$10,000 grant from the Southern Downs Regional Council and the remaining \$35,000 was raised by brigade members. This was achieved through their fundraising efforts with the support of the local community. It was an incredible commitment all round and it did not stop there. Brigade members also assisted with the site works and construction. Their drive and dedication is inspiring and that is why Queenslanders know they can count on our fireys in the best and the worst of times. Their work is more important than ever in this year's bushfire season. I wish them well and commend them for doing what they do best, which is keeping Queenslanders safe.

The Palaszczuk government supports our fireys and will continue to back them every step of the way. Under Labor, more than 67 new firefighting recruits have joined the Queensland Fire and Emergency Services. Not only are we taking on more fireys, but also we are equipping them with the training, skills and equipment that they need to look after the safety of Queenslanders. We have set aside more than \$9 million for Fire and Emergency Services facilities in regional Queensland: \$4 million towards a replacement fire and rescue station in Bundaberg; \$350,000 for the relocation and upgrade of the auxiliary fire and rescue station at Cunnamulla; \$250,000 for the relocation and upgrade of the auxiliary fire and rescue station at Gordonvale; \$600,000 for the relocation and upgrade of the fire and rescue station at Roma; \$600,000 for the upgrade of the auxiliary fire and rescue station at Dayboro; and almost \$1 million for amenities at 23 fire and rescue stations across regional Queensland, up north and out west. That funding is about more than bricks and mortar; it is about providing emergency services personnel with the equipment, resources and infrastructure that they need to do their job.

The Palaszczuk government remains committed to ensuring that, whilst emergency service workers are looking after Queenslanders, we are behind them and we are there supporting them every step of the way. Our fireys have been working hard to ensure local communities are well prepared for this year's bushfire season. They have undertaken extensive back-burning operations in places such as Rockhampton, Yeppoon and Byfield, which have greater than usual fuel loads due to the build-up of debris from ex-Tropical Cyclone Marcia.

An opposition member: Sounds like mobile national parks.

Mrs MILLER: Did you say that it sounds like a mobile national park? Would you like to repeat what you just said? No, you don't, do you? You are ashamed.

Mr KRAUSE: I rise to a point of order. I ask that the minister please refer to members by their parliamentary title and not address them directly across the chamber.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Farmer): Order! Are you making a point of order?

Mr KRAUSE: That was my point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: The minister has the call. I am sorry: I was talking to the Speaker when all of that was happening so I make no judgement on it, but I ask the minister to continue.

Mrs MILLER: Thank you very much, Madam Deputy Speaker. Since being sworn in as fire minister seven months ago, I have made it a priority of mine to get out and about and meet as many crews on the ground as possible. I have seen firsthand the amazing work of our fireys, whether it was in Central Queensland in the aftermath of Tropical Cyclone Marcia, here in South-East Queensland following the severe flash floods in May with the bravery of the swift water rescue teams or in Mount Isa after that terrible, terrible tragedy. I have met firefighters from right across the state in Goondiwindi, Warwick, Burleigh Heads, Rockhampton, Mount Isa, Pomona, the south coast area office, Mareeba,

Ingham and South Townsville. Closer to home, I have been a long-time supporter of the Ripley Valley Rural Fire Brigade, made up of dedicated men and women of Ipswich and surrounding districts. They do a mighty job protecting our community.

Tonight I take this opportunity to thank them, to thank our fire officers who are advising us in the parliament this evening and to thank all of our fireys for dedicating their lives to helping others and for also putting their own lives on the line to keep Queenslanders safe. It is an incredible sacrifice and one that our Palaszczuk government deeply appreciates. Let the record clearly show that the LNP dilly-dallied for three years; all talk, no action. It is Labor that is delivering these reforms in relation to firefighters, right across the state.

 **Ms BATES** (Mudgeeraba—LNP) (11.54 pm): Tonight I rise to speak in favour of the opposition's private member's bill, the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation (Protecting Firefighters) Amendment Bill 2015. In a huge blow to businesses throughout this state, Labor's bill will retrospectively reinstate common law rights for injured workers, potentially at a huge cost to Queensland businesses, and prohibit access to claims histories for employers. Contrary to the Labor government, the LNP believes employers should be able to know the claims history of a prospective employee in relation to workers compensation, as it gives them the opportunity to manage that person and appropriately allocate the duties they undertake. It is no wonder that the Chamber of Commerce & Industry Queensland outlined strong reservations about the government's bill in its submissions to the committee, particularly in relation to costs for Queensland businesses, and highlighted the potential impact to the economy as a whole.

Equally concerning is the fact that Queensland nurses who fall under the workers compensation scheme are still routinely having their details shared with unions in an effort to dupe nurses into joining the QNU. As I have stated on many occasions, nurses join a union for protection and indemnity, not to become card-carrying members of the Labor Party unaware that their union dues are funding Labor campaigns. As a registered general nurse, I remain concerned that this government is not addressing the privacy concerns of public sector nurses who fall under its union encouragement policy as a result of its drive to boost union numbers for its mates in the union movements.

In addition, Labor's bill is fundamentally unfair and discriminates against the 35,000 volunteer firefighters who serve diligently throughout this state. Under the provisions of Labor's bill, the hardworking volunteer firefighters in my electorate of Mudgeeraba would be required to attend 150 incidents before they are considered for workers compensation. My electorate is home to a number of fantastic local rural fire brigades, including at Mudgeeraba, Gilston/Advancetown, Clagiraba which I share with my good friend the member for Gaven, Bonogin, Springbrook, Lower Beechmont and the Numinbah Valley. They all work to ensure the safety of residents throughout my hinterland electorate and their firefighters regularly put themselves in harm's way. I take this opportunity to thank first officers in my electorate for their service, particularly Philip Thompson from Numinbah Valley, Darryl Hall from Lower Beechmont, Tristan Gough from Gilston/Advancetown, Simon Hall from Bonogin, Paul Spinks from Springbrook, Jay Lockyer from Mudgeeraba and Luke Jarzynski from Clagiraba.

As a result of their line of work, those volunteer firefighters may be exposed to conditions that could lead to them contracting specified latent onset injuries, including cancer. It does not matter how many fires they attend or how many incidents they assist with; volunteer firefighters in my electorate and throughout Queensland still face very real challenges in their line of work which leave them susceptible to lasting illnesses. An arbitrary minimum number of fires attended is not the way to ensure our fireys are looked after.

This Labor policy flies in the face of community expectations. I am sure that the countless individuals who have received assistance from our rural fire brigades over the years would be appalled at the way they are being treated by this Labor government. With homes in hinterland electorates such as my electorate of Mudgeeraba, Clagiraba and Springbrook in particular, while in some instances the red fire trucks are fairly close by they cannot access the driveways.

Mr Cramp: And Beechmont.

Ms BATES: And Beechmont as well. The crews cannot get the red fire trucks down some driveways, so crews in the yellow fire trucks respond.

I understand that on 9 September the *Sunshine Coast Daily* quoted the member for Bulimba, as the chair of the Finance and Administration Committee, as saying that her own government's bill is not workable as there is 'not enough evidence to actually justify the threshold' of 150 fires for rural fire brigades, as well as identifying issues in relation to record keeping and the burden this would place on

our fireys. I am supporting the LNP's bill, which will see all firefighters, including full-time, auxiliary and volunteer fireys, receive workers compensation straight away if they contract cancer. We believe that all firefighters should receive the same level of protection, regardless of their pay status or the colour of their fire engine.

An opposition member interjected.

Ms BATES: I take that interjection. The verdict of firefighters throughout Queensland in relation to Labor's legislation was clear and reflects an obvious failure by this Labor government to adequately consult before it proposed these laws. This is from a government that says they care and consult. What an insult to my brave rural volunteer firefighters—men and women of courage who routinely keep the hinterland of my electorate and its residents safe.

Encouragingly, firefighters have given their clear support to the LNP's bill, which provides the highest level of support to fireys in the country. The United Firefighters Union Queensland, the Queensland Auxiliary Firefighters Association and the Rural Fire Brigades Association Queensland all support the LNP bill. Unfortunately, this Labor government was not going to support our legislation which protected the rights of fireys until it was shamed into it by the LNP. I congratulate the member for Kawana for introducing a sensible bill which will see the health and safety of firefighters in my electorate protected into the future. I encourage other members of this House to support our sensible LNP alternative.

I look forward to hosting the shadow minister in my electorate next week so he can meet the wonderful volunteers that make up my seven rural brigades in the electorate of Mudgeeraba. Unlike the ALP, I support my fireys.

 **Mrs GILBERT** (Mackay—ALP) (12.00 am): I rise to support the government's Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2015. I do so because it supports deemed disease provisions for firefighters.

On 3 June 2015 the member for Kawana introduced the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation (Protecting Firefighters) Amendment Bill 2015, a private member's bill. The objective of the private member's bill is the same as the government's bill and both bills propose deemed disease coverage for the same 12 specified cancers. However, the private member's bill fails in its policy intention to assist those who are currently having difficulty proving their latent onset cancers are related to their past work as firefighters.

There are significant concerns that the deemed provisions in the private member's bill will not provide certainty of coverage for firefighters exposed to smoke and other substances prior to the commencement of the amendments. Further, there are concerns that any firefighter who becomes incapacitated with a specific cancer prior to the commencement of the amendments but is diagnosed after the commencement of the bill will not be able to use the private member's bill deeming provisions.

The Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation Act 2003 includes specific provisions for establishing the date of injury for latent onset diseases such as cancer. Section 36A of the act is designed to ensure that an injured worker gets compensation benefits for a latent onset injury where the calculation is based on the date the person is diagnosed with a disease. However, the question of whether a person is a worker and whether they have a work related injury must be decided under the act in force at the time the injury was actually sustained. This may, for example, be under the Workers' Compensation Act 1916.

Clause 17 of the government's Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2015 amends the act to ensure that the deeming provisions apply to determining whether an eligible firefighter has sustained an injury, not the definition of injury that existed at the time the injury was actually sustained. Without this amendment an insurer will be forced to determine if the cancer was a work related injury at the time the worker actually attended the exposure incident. The firefighter will then be required to submit proof that their cancer was the result of their employment. As members can see, this amendment of section 36A is essential for ensuring the operation of the deeming disease provisions for current and former firefighters.

The private member's bill does not make any change to section 36A of the act. It is uncertain how these deeming provisions will interact with section 36A of the act. Under the private member's bill, where a firefighter is exposed to smoke and other substances prior to the commencement of the amendments then section 36A could nullify the operation of the deeming provisions for that firefighter. This places considerable doubt on the number of firefighters who will benefit from the provisions.

In addition, under the private member's bill a person contracts a disease when they are first diagnosed, become totally or partially incapacitated or dies, depending on which occurs first. It is possible for a firefighter with a specified cancer to become partially incapacitated because of the disease prior to them being diagnosed. This means that it is possible for a firefighter with a specified cancer who has not yet been diagnosed to be excluded from accessing the deemed disease entitlement because they have become incapacitated prior to the commencement of the amendments.

As a consequence of rushing to get this bill before the parliament, the private member's bill has been poorly conceived and drafted. The bill, if passed, would not deliver the benefits that Queensland firefighters rightfully expect it to deliver and the member for Kawana claims it will deliver. This bill will see firefighters who have one of these insidious cancers denied swift access to workers compensation. The bill is flawed.

The Queensland Fire and Emergency Service is committed to protecting the health and safety of its full-time, auxiliary and volunteer firefighters. The Queensland Fire and Emergency Service provides protective equipment, including respiratory protective equipment, to their volunteer firefighters free of charge.

Rural firefighters mainly respond to vegetation fires and bushfires. They are not required to deal with more complex fires or disasters from chemical incidents or fight fires in buildings. Therefore these firefighters are issued with a type of face mask which protects them from inhaling particulates and smoke from the type of fires that they are required to fight. The P2 face mask is the standard for respiratory protection from bushfire smoke in Australia and New Zealand and is provided to all volunteer firefighters.

When I met with the Habana rural firefighters they told me that they do not just go to grass fires and bushfires and that these fires are not always what they expect. People dump all types of toxic rubbish in the bush and the fire becomes a dangerous smoke hazard.

Mr Costigan interjected.

Mrs GILBERT: They told me while I was there that they had not had a visit from the member for Whitsunday. The Habana rural firefighters are in his electorate. The member told us earlier today that he has had to travel 80,000 kilometres this year to get away from his electorate. It is a shame he did not spend more time in his electorate. He could have met with firefighters.

It is true that permanent and auxiliary firefighters are equipped with a P3 mask which provides extra protection. However, these masks are worn in situations where highly toxic or highly irritant particles are present, usually in house fires or chemical incidents which present very different environments to those encountered by volunteer firefighters.

Mr Costigan interjected.

Mrs GILBERT: Eighty thousand kilometres. He cannot wait to get away from his electorate.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Farmer): Order! Member for Mackay, I ask that all conversations be directed through the chair.

Mrs GILBERT: Certainly. The P3 mask when fighting bushfires can induce heat stress since bushfires often take a long time to put out and usually occur in very hot weather and require working across large areas. Easy-to-use protective equipment and face masks will help volunteer firefighters to cope with the heat and discomfort over a possible 12-hour stretch of fighting a bushfire.

However, in order to ensure that every firefighter—permanent, auxiliary or volunteer—is given access to the highest level of protection, the Queensland Fire and Emergency Service is piloting a trial of P3 masks which commences at the end of this month. The trial will run for 12 months and will test the suitability of the P3 face mask as a standard respiratory protection for all firefighters, including volunteers. We may rely on the scientific and research section of the Queensland Fire and Emergency Services to deliver some of the accurate results at the end of the trial and to identify the best option to protect volunteer firefighters from the worst effects of doing their job. These trials will complement the new deemed disease provisions introduced in this bill and will assist to ensure that the risk to firefighters' health and safety is minimised as far as reasonably practicable. I commend the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2015 to the House. I encourage those opposite to stand up for injured workers.

 **Mr POWELL** (Glass House—LNP) (12.10 am): I rise this evening—rather, this morning—to support the LNP's Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation (Protecting Firefighters) Amendment Bill 2015 and to oppose the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation and Other Legislation Amendment

Bill 2015 put forward by the Palaszczuk Labor government. I do this for two reasons. Firstly, the electorate of Glass House is very fortunate to be so well served and protected by some 19 voluntary rural fire brigades and two auxiliary fire services. If it were not for the tireless efforts of those rural fire brigades, Glass House would not be the great place it is to live and work today. The second reason is that Glass House relies almost entirely on small and medium businesses to provide employment opportunities not only to the residents of Glass House but also to the surrounding areas. But let me first come back to the rural firefighters.

A couple of my colleagues have raised these matters already this evening, but I think the best way for me to demonstrate the difference between what the LNP's bill offers and what the government's bill does not offer is to use the submissions made to the committee by the Maroochy South Rural Fire Brigades Group. Hamish Murdoch is the group officer and he is also involved in one of my rural fire brigades at Eudlo. In regard to the LNP bill, he writes—

The Maroochy South Rural Fire Brigades Group represents 10 Rural Fire Brigades on the Sunshine Coast: Bli Bli, Kiel Mountain, West Woombye, Obi Obi, Kureelipa, Mapleton, Montville, Palmwoods, Eudlo and Ilkley. These brigades are supported by some 250 volunteer fire fighters.

We support this proposed amendment because volunteer Rural fire fighters would receive the same degree of cover for the prescribed cancers as Urban fire fighters, Auxiliary fire fighters and paid Rural Operations staff.

We acknowledge the efforts to the Queensland Parliament to address this important reform which will be of great benefit to Rural volunteer firefighters.

The letter is signed—

Hamish Murdoch

Group Officer

His submission on behalf of his group to the government's bill is unfortunately not as complimentary. He again is writing on behalf of the Maroochy South Rural Fire Brigades Group. He goes on to state—

We would like to make the following points regarding the proposed legislation:

1. Our view is that this legislation discriminates—

discriminates—

against volunteer Rural fire fighters. Our understanding is that Urban, Auxiliary and paid Rural Operations employees who perform firefighting duties only have to attend a single incident to qualify for cover under this legislation. Volunteer rural firefighters have to attend 150 events before they can qualify for coverage.

2. According to Schedule 4A a volunteer Rural fire fighter will have to attend 150 events within a 5 year period to qualify for cover for the most aggressive cancers. This means that the volunteer has to attend an average of 30 events in a fire season. It is our view that this is a performance figure that would be rarely achieved by even the most enthusiastic volunteer.

3. We seek confirmation of the science which shows that there is a difference between the effects of smoke on an Urban fire fighter, Auxiliary fire fighter or a paid Rural Operations member of staff compared to a Rural volunteer fire fighter.

4. We certainly disagree with the methodology of counting the number of incidents attended in a day. It is quite possible that a volunteer can do a full shift on the downwind side of a single vegetation fire and therefore be constantly breathing in a toxic atmosphere. This would be very different to attending two small fires on the same day which may be controlled very easily with little or no smoke issues.

Hamish goes on to state—

We acknowledge the efforts of the Queensland Parliament to address this important reform which will be of great benefit to Rural volunteer firefighters.

At this point I acknowledge the work of the committee, particularly the members of the LNP but also the government members who have stood up to their own government and said, 'Yes, the LNP got it right; Labor got it wrong. We need to ensure that volunteer rural firefighters are not discriminated against, that they have the same opportunity to access this protection against these insidious cancers as auxiliary and urban firefighters do.' So I applaud the work of the committee. I understand that the government are moving amendments to their bill, but it should not have been necessary in the first place. If they had taken the lead from the LNP, if they had heard the voices that were coming from our rural firefighters across the electorates, including my own, then these amendments would not have been necessary.

I mentioned that the second reason I will be voting against the government's bill and supporting the opposition's bill is that the electorate of Glass House relies almost solely on small and medium enterprises for employment opportunities in the electorate not only for residents of the electorate but

also for neighbouring electorates. We in the LNP believe a number of things. We do believe that workers should be protected when they go to work. We do believe that it is small and medium enterprises that ultimately create jobs. It is not the government; it is small and medium enterprises. The reality is that if we make it impossible for small and medium enterprises to operate then unfortunately there are no jobs for us to protect workers from. There will simply be no jobs.

Ms Grace interjected.

Mr POWELL: I hear the interjections from the other side, but what we saw under the Beattie-Bligh era was increasing red tape and increasing costs driving small and medium enterprises to the wall to the point where they were cutting staff, where they were going back to basically being single operators, mum and dad operators. That meant that employees who we are trying to protect did not have jobs to go to in the first place.

The work we did as a government to get the balance right between protecting workers and ensuring that WorkCover premiums were far more manageable is exemplary. I have had any number of small business owners come to me and say, 'Please stand up to what the Labor government are proposing in their legislation. It is unfair. It is going to send our backs to the wall again. Our premiums are going to go up.'

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Farmer): Order! The level of conversation in the House is rising. I know it is very late, but could members please try to keep their conversation to a minimum or take them outside?

Mr POWELL: 'Please,' they would say to me, 'stand up against what the Labor government are proposing. What we have achieved is right. In particular, what they are proposing in terms of the repeal of the common law threshold, the retrospective nature of that repeal and the prohibition of claims history to be provided to employers will be devastating for us and our ability to employ locals and to employ people from around the Sunshine Coast and the Moreton Bay Regional Council areas.'

The member for Kawana earlier referred to one particular example. The electorate of Glass House is blessed to have some of the best horticultural land in the state.

Mr Bennett: Second.

Mr POWELL: Best. I take the interjection from the member for Burnett. He is delusional tonight. It is very late, I understand. We have the best horticultural land in the state. We have wonderful pineapple and strawberry growers. What would happen because of the seasonal nature of the work is that we would have casual employees come in for the picking seasons and would move from one operation to another. What they were finding was that there were a number of employees—and I will stress a small number, not a lot but a small number—who would actually game the system. From one year to the next they would turn up at a different strawberry farm or a different pineapple farm, spend two days on the job, injure their back, put in a claim, be successful, drive up the premiums of the operator, take the rest of the season off, turn up the following season at a new farm and do the same thing all over again. One clear example of the sensibility of the LNP government's amendments to workers compensation was the ability for an employer to ask for a claims history and to be able to find these individuals who game the system and in so doing drive up the premium costs of the employers.

Earlier this evening we heard the Treasurer talk about amending the firefighting aspect of this bill because the government was listening. Again, the government should amend the other aspects of the bill; in fact, they should throw out their bill altogether and support the LNP's bill because of what it does, as clearly they are not listening. Others mentioned what the CCIQ wrote to each and every one of us yesterday outlining their serious concerns with that proposed. The CCIQ is opposed to the proposal to introduce a statutory adjustment scheme. In respect of retaining employees' access to an individual's work history, the CCIQ recommends that this provision remain in the legislation in the interests of the benefits to employees and the duty of care and in turn employer wellbeing and safety.

We have a clear choice tonight—support a well-thought-through bill which supports rural firefighters alongside auxiliary and urban firefighters and which supports small and medium enterprises throughout Queensland or support Labor's bill that sees both destroyed.

 **Mrs STUCKEY** (Currumbin—LNP) (12.21 am): I rise to contribute to the cognate debate on the Workers' Compensation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2015 and the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation (Protecting Firefighters) Amendment Bill. My contribution will mainly cover the protecting firefighters component. Tonight I pay tribute to them all across Queensland but in particular those in my electorate of Currumbin.

The policy objective of this private member's bill is to introduce deemed disease coverage for Queensland full-time, auxiliary and volunteer firefighters who contract one of 12 specified cancers in the course of their employment. As the shadow minister outlined in his explanatory speech, if a firefighter suffers a disease which is deemed work related, which is listed in the table in the bill and which meets the specified time requirements, it will be deemed that the disease was caused by employment for the purpose of workers compensation. This legislation moves the onus of proof from the worker to the employer or insurer to prove the disease was not due to the worker's employment. This is about making the process easier. The last thing someone needs when they are told they have cancer is to face extra battles. Former minister Jack Dempsey was extremely passionate about this and had been working on it for some time. The introduction of our private member's bill delivers on LNP commitments from 2014 supporting presumptive legislation for firefighters.

Queensland has over 2,000 permanent firefighters, 2,000 part-time auxiliary firefighters and some 15,000 active rural fire brigades with about 30,000 rural fire brigade members of the association. We have three dedicated rural fire brigades within the Currumbin electorate: Currumbin Valley, Tallebudgera Valley and Tomewin. The job of a rural firefighter is unpredictable. Each brigade is made up of approximately 15 active and 10 additional members, all of whom are volunteers who regularly give freely of their time. The southern Gold Coast is blessed with exquisitely beautiful and extremely diverse environments that attract families and individuals to acreage living. Our community is grateful for the remarkable efforts of our fireys, who undertake proactive initiatives and reactive measures to protect lives and landscapes.

Local fireys tell me that Currumbin Valley has unique foliage, best described as rainforest, that therefore does not burn at the same velocity as neighbouring Tallebudgera Valley with its heavier foliage which can unfortunately see fires rip through at an alarming rate and require a more widespread response. Just recently we had a fairly significant fire burning in Tallebudgera Valley, and officers from neighbouring brigades were deployed to assist, all willing to sacrifice their time and expertise to help where needed. On behalf of Currumbin residents and the wider community I place on record my thanks to those men and women who kept under control not only that fire but others that have threatened our homes in our valleys over many years, and mine is one of those. I also commend the men and women stationed at Coolangatta Fire Station who daily put their safety on the line to protect us and our homes.

I have consulted with my local rural fire brigades, who have rightly expressed their concern at the legislation proposed by this Labor government. The most glaringly obvious issue is the requirement that volunteer firefighters must attend 150 fires before receiving adequate protection. Not only is this discriminatory; it is entirely unworkable and highlights a lack of foresight by Labor. Some of my local fireys, who have been serving as volunteers for over 20 years, could not for the life of them estimate how many fires they have fought. Even if they had kept a log, what exactly constitutes a fire? Is it putting out a cigarette butt that had the potential to cause immeasurable damage on our dry land, or perhaps a false alarm which selfless volunteers responded to in the middle of the night ready to face whatever obstacle was presented? Does that count?

In their submission to the committee, the Gold Coast Rural Fire Brigade group said—

We are *truly disappointed* that volunteer firefighters in this state whom freely give their time to protect life and property in Queensland along side allied agencies and fire and emergency staff are not offered the same protection as a paid staff member.

When making a submission on the opposition's private member's bill the Rural Fire Brigades Association Queensland Inc. said—

The proposed Private Members Bill regards all firefighters as equal and does not define a person by their pay status, rather recognises all firefighters equally as Queenslanders who place their lives at risk in defending the community.

In his submission, Darren Badger from the Tallebudgera Rural Fire Brigade said that 'smoke does not discriminate' and that 'we are trying to encourage new volunteers, not scare them away'.

As more and more people choose a rural lifestyle to escape the pace of city life, our rural firefighters are becoming more and more important. I know many rural fireys who cannot go to their paid job when there is a fire in our backyard as they are duty-bound to make themselves available to fight fires. Labor's proposal to introduce legislation that discriminated against these good men and women was met with a wave of rejection. I am genuinely pleased to see that this outcry resulted in the committee's recommendation to abandon the 150 incidents quota. It is pleasing the government has changed its stance and agreed to remove the quota. It is just a shame that this anxiety and division amongst our fireys was created in the first place. There should have been bipartisan support all along for this kind of bill and there would have been if Labor saw all categories of firefighters as being worthy of receiving equal treatment.

Our firefighters—full time, part time, auxiliary, volunteer, rural or whatever they may be—all put their life on the line for us. These amendments demonstrate that, and we support them and will protect them. However, I cannot give my support to Labor's proposed changes to the Workers' Compensation Act. This attack on our small businesses is so typical of Labor and drives home the vast divide between Labor and the LNP, because the LNP gets small business and Labor chokes them. Labor gives lip-service to small business, and if ever there was a misfit Minister for Small Business it is the member for Ashgrove, who punished small businesses with a waste levy and supported a carbon tax when she was last a minister in the Bligh government. Now we all have received an earnest letter from CCIQ calling on every member in this House to block the passage of the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2015. CCIQ have a seat on the minister's Small Business Advisory Council, an entity existing to advise the government on initiatives to grow small business, and yet they are being ignored by this union-infested Labor government. The LNP will be reminding Queensland's 400,000 small businesses that Labor will do anything for their Labor mates at the expense of small business, no matter how many of them go bust.

 **Mr FURNER** (Ferny Grove—ALP) (12.29 am): I rise to support the deemed disease provisions for firefighters in the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2015. Madam Deputy Speaker Farmer, I start by acknowledging you as chair of the committee and all the other committee members, who did an excellent job on the report. We are about to see appropriate legislation come through which will protect firefighters equally across the state of Queensland.

I know that the secretary of the United Firefighters' Union of Queensland, John Oliver, is still up tonight listening to this debate. I spoke to him earlier tonight and he was shocked by the contribution the member for Kawana made in the chamber this evening. I have had a lot of consultation on this matter because I am a member of the Samford Rural Fire Brigade and I—

Mr Rickuss interjected.

Mr FURNER: You might learn something. I went out to the Samford Rural Fire Brigade and had engagement with the members of that brigade that I am a member of. I have not done a lot of work with that brigade at this stage as I only joined them earlier this year—and members could imagine that work commitments and so on have put impediments on me being involved to some extent—but I was rewarded by the stories they told me about the bill that is before us this evening.

I would like to put on the record my thanks to Alan Wells, the brigade's first officer, and all the other rural fire brigades for the submissions they made to the committee. The member for Kawana was incompetent and referred his bill to the incorrect committee—which was my committee and not the Deputy Speaker's committee. As a result, I was contacted by copious amounts of people right throughout the state, so there was plenty of consultation on their bill because the bill was referred to the wrong committee. They got it right eventually and we moved on.

I recall when I was in the Senate the Commonwealth passed legislation on this matter which dealt with deemed disease provisions for firefighters in 2011. The difference between the debate on that bill was there was bipartisanship across-the-board. The Labor Party, the Liberal Party, the National Party, the Greens and all the Independents in the Senate came to the conclusion that that particular bill had to be passed. In the Commonwealth and also in Western Australia, there is no extension for deeming to volunteers. They made it clear, subject to their views and their evidence, that there should not be deeming to that particular bill. We are in a different situation this evening where we will not have the situation where we will be extending the exposure of 150 fires to our volunteers and others as a result of the passage of this bill through the chamber either this evening or tomorrow.

Other jurisdictions like Tasmania, South Australia, Western Australia and the Northern Territory all have introduced deemed disease provisions for firefighters. Victoria and New South Wales are the only two states that have not introduced these provisions. The government's bill provides deemed disease coverage to Queensland firefighters for the same 12 cancers with the same qualifying periods as these other jurisdictions. Like in these other jurisdictions, coverage is only provided for periods where a firefighter has been engaged in active firefighting duties. However, the government's bill does not include the same restrictions that apply in these other jurisdictions.

The government's bill extends coverage to Queensland's volunteer firefighters also. In Tasmania and the Northern Territory, a volunteer must have attended at least 150 exposure incidents and meet additional time frames that these exposure incidents must have occurred within. In recognition of the unique role and service provided by Queensland's rural and volunteer firefighters compared to these jurisdictions, the government's bill does not include these additional requirements for volunteer firefighters.

South Australia is the only other jurisdiction that does not require volunteer firefighters to meet any additional exposure incident attendance. When they first introduced their legislation, I think by memory they had a limit of 175 exposures and since then they have brought that back to nil. South Australia's legislation has a 10-year post-retirement limit on making a claim. Tasmania and the Northern Territory also place a 10-year limit on claims post retirement. As all of the other specified cancers are latent onset diseases, this limiting requirement will exclude a significant number of firefighters from accessing the deemed diseases provisions.

The government's bill clearly recognises that these cancers develop over time and that it would be unfair to place such a restriction on a firefighter's entitlement. Western Australia's provisions also exclude all retired and former firefighters by requiring the firefighter to be employed at the time of their diagnosis. The government's bill does not contain these types of restrictions in further recognition of the nature of these injuries. The government's bill also includes provisions that clarify that those eligible rural fire brigade members and volunteer firefighters are entitled to seek common law damages under the act—a unique opportunity—unlike those opposite in their proposed bill.

Specific amendments are made to the act to ensure that the contract of insurance covering rural fire brigade members and volunteer firefighters covers the payment of damages where an eligible firefighter has contracted a specified cancer. Once the former government's unfair common law threshold is removed, all Queensland firefighters who have had a claim accepted under the deeming provision will have an unrestricted right to seek damages at common law. No other jurisdiction that provides deemed disease entitlements to firefighters allows for this unrestricted right.

In spite of the LNP's campaign of misinformation and scaremongering about the government's bill, it is clear to anyone who has read the bill that it will give Queensland firefighters the best workers compensation access of all jurisdictions. The bill strengthens the existing entitlements to workers compensation for firefighters and provides volunteer firefighters the entitlement to seek common law damages under the act. It gives me great pleasure to commend the bill to this House.

 **Mr CRAMP** (Gaven—LNP) (12.35 am): I rise to speak on the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation (Protecting Firefighters) Amendment Bill 2015. This bill seeks to introduce deemed disease coverage for full-time, auxiliary and volunteer firefighters in Queensland who contract one of the 12 specified cancers in the course of their employment. The origin of this policy was publicly announced by the former LNP government in December 2014, before my time in this chamber. Since this announcement, discussions have continued to take place with stakeholders. I have personally taken the time to engage with interest groups both here in the parliament as well as locally in the Gaven electorate.

The strength of the LNP bill is the way in which it has stamped out discrimination in regard to the type of coverage offered. It does not matter what category the firefighter belongs to—whether it be full time, part time or volunteer. They can all be exposed to the same gases at the same fire. I have met a lot of families and individuals in my time who have been affected by cancer. Suffice to say, a cancer diagnosis in its own right is a traumatic experience for everyone involved and the fight against cancer is even tougher. If we can alleviate some of the suffering of these patients through eliminating some of the processes and bureaucracy they have to sift through, it is going to be a better outcome for patients and their loved ones. This presumptive legislation means that if a firefighter contracts one of the 12 specified cancers listed from 2011 Commonwealth legislation, it is then presumed that the cancer was related to their activities as a firefighter for the purposes of a workers compensation claim.

Without this type of legislation, firefighters would be asked to provide details of specific exposures to carcinogens and/or the names and dates of any large fires or incidents. Scientific evidence has shown that firefighters are more prone than members of the general public to contracting cancer—and that is because of the kind of work they undertake. It has even been confirmed by Monash University researchers that there is very good evidence from years of previous human studies that links the increased risk of several types of cancer with this type of work.

In the Gaven electorate, we are very proud of our local rural fireys at the Guanaba Rural Fire Brigade and the Clagiraba Rural Fire Brigade, which by virtue of its location right on the border of the Gaven and Mudgeeraba electorates enjoys the support of both me and my colleague and friend the member for Mudgeeraba, Ros Bates MP. The fantastic local volunteers who man these stations give so much of their personal time to help protect and assist our communities when they are most in need during emergency situations. When I say 'our communities', I am not simply speaking about the communities in the Gaven electorate. The volunteer officers of the Guanaba and the Clagiraba rural

fire brigades—like all other rural brigades—answer the call for not only their local communities but for all communities across Queensland and Australia. Last week I had the chance to meet and speak again with the Guanaba rural fire officers. When you walk into the Guanaba rural fire station, you cannot help but be drawn to the numerous newspaper articles and community accolades that adorn the station wall detailing the heroic feats that these incredible Gold Coast locals have achieved.

During this meeting the topic of presumptive legislation arose. I was asked to explain the difference between the Labor government's and the LNP opposition's versions of the legislation. I could only explain the difference as simply this: the LNP stands to protect all firefighters with the same protective legislation regardless of whether they are urban, auxiliary or rural; full time, part time or volunteer. There is no discrimination, only equality for all who put themselves in danger to protect their families, their friends and communities across Queensland.

In contrast, the Queensland Labor government had seemingly made the decision that rural fire officers do not deserve the same protection as other fire officers. To achieve equal protection under Labor's legislation, rural firefighters would need to attend 150 fires. The disbelief on the face of every officer in the room that Labor would devalue their worth in this way was absolutely evident for all to see. What reason could I provide the officers regarding Labor's intentions? I could only advise that there is no logical reason for this quota other than some perceived possible financial gain through the exclusion of rural fire officers.

As a proud member of this LNP team, I have taken a great interest in supporting the efforts of our shadow minister for police, fire, emergency services and Corrective Services, Jarrod Bleijie MP, in this campaign for presumptive legislation to support our firefighters. Now thanks to the LNP's steadfast position to respect all firefighters equally we see common sense prevail, with the bipartisan recommendation of the committee that Labor's unfair 150 fire quota for rural fire volunteers be scrapped.

My involvement in this process has provided me the opportunity to meet many of the fantastic Queenslanders who keep the Rural Fire Brigades Association of Queensland, or the RFBAQ, operational. One such person is Mr Alan Gillespie. He is the state president of the RFBAQ and the south coast delegate. Yesterday Alan, who is one of the most knowledgeable and hardworking individuals in the Rural Fire Service, has provided me with the following correspondence which I proudly read on his behalf. It states—

Gaven has 2 Rural Fire Brigades, Clagiraba and Guanaba. Both are active brigades and respond to fires right across the Gold Coast. Both brigades contributed to the Cyclone Marcia Taskforce earlier this year and performed brilliantly. They are both small but dedicated brigades that protect the rural urban interface in the Gold Coast hinterland. In the last 2 years these brigades have undertaken strategic hazard reduction burns to protect vulnerable communities, attended numerous bush and structure fires and held community education days to help their local communities prepare for the bushfire season.

This year is predicted to be a busy time for firefighters in the Gaven electorate due to the El Nino influence. Brigades have also been busy training in the new GWN radio communications network, introduced by the LNP Government to greatly enhance operational capability for emergency services across South East Queensland.

Mr Gillespie goes on to state—

These brigades are part of the Rural Fire Service Queensland's South Coast Area Office based at Worongary which was established earlier this year as a result of the LNP Governments far reaching Malone Review into rural fire services. The South Coast Area Office is commanded by Inspector Kaye Healing who was recently promoted to the position. Kaye is the first female operational fire commander in QFES history.

I am the President of the Rural Fire Brigades Association (this is a voluntary position not a paid one) that represents the interests of the State's 37,000 volunteer firefighters. I am also an officer with Guanaba Rural Fire Brigade and a Deputy Group Officer with Gold Coast Rural Fire Brigade Group. The RFBAQ vigorously opposed the 150 incidents pre-requisite proposed by the Government and I actually gave evidence twice before the Parliamentary Finance and Administration Committee hearing on Presumptive Legislation. The changes recommended by the FAC are welcomed by the RFBAQ as this will give Queensland volunteer firefighters the best presumptive legislation protection in Australia.

This correspondence is a representative voice of the heroes of our community. I say to all members of this chamber: what are we here for if we cannot support and care for those who support and care for our community?

 **Mrs FRECKLINGTON** (Nanango—LNP) (12.43 am): It gives me great pleasure to rise in this House tonight to add a contribution to the debate. I think it is absolutely essential that we cover off on the issues and it is so unfortunate that we even need to debate them in this House tonight. The two issues I am going to touch on are the changes to the workers compensation legislation and, as a lot of

my friends and colleagues on this side of the House have touched on, as well as the former attorney-general, the shadow minister spoke so eloquently about for some 59 minutes, the protection of the rural fireys.

First, I will touch on the importance of the amendments that we have had to put in place to protect our rural fireys. Why is it that whenever a Labor government is in place there may be the rhetoric about, 'We will support the regions,' but how simple is it to protect the rural fireys? Do they not work as hard as the urban guys? Honestly, I look around at all of my rural fire sheds that are sitting on the sides of the roads all over my electorate. There are way too many for me to stand up here and list them all. For example, I was at the Bloomin' Beautiful Blackbutt Festival on the weekend where I was talking to the first officer of the Taromeo Rural Fire Brigade, Les Lane. I also want to commend secretary Margaret Carrick, because both Les and Margaret took the time to write in to this committee. I thank the Lord that this committee saw the sense—and why it took them two months to come out with it I have no idea—in listening to people like Les and Margaret who were saying, 'We are as hardworking as our urban colleagues. We work just as hard.' They might not go to as many fires, but I can tell honourable members that they do not go home after a five-hour shift. It is absolutely incredible.

An opposition member: The sense of commitment.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: The sense of commitment—I see that at places like the Wivenhoe Pocket Rural Fire Brigade that I had the great pleasure of being at not long ago, Crows Nest, Cooyar—honestly there are so many. Everyone that I spoke to could not believe that the opposition had to run such a massive campaign. We had enough time for the shadow minister to put out posters. We had to do months and months of lobbying. What I would like to know in all of this is where was the minister standing up for the firefighters? Where was she? Why did the minister, Jo-Ann Miller, not come out into the general public and say, 'Obviously this is wrong and we need to protect our rural fireys'? How did she seriously go around the state—maybe she did not go to any rural fireys. That would make sense. I have not seen her in my electorate at all. If she has been there, she certainly has not notified the local member. Did she go around to any of these rural fireys and say, 'I'm going to stand up for you because if you get cancer just because you have only fought 100 fires not 150'—do not take into consideration the number of hours—where was that minister standing up for those rural fireys from my electorate? I honestly do not know. It is an embarrassment that a government has to be forced by a couple of decent people on the committee from the Labor Party who actually said, 'Guys, this is completely wrong. We've got to listen to the LNP. We've only been back in government for five minutes and already the LNP have got it right.'

I congratulate the shadow minister and the LNP members of the committee on the work that they did for bringing common sense back. I would be encouraged to see all of the Labor members stand up and give that acknowledgement to the rural fireys. If they get out and about a little bit and they look at some of those sheds on the side of the road and they took the time to speak to some of these good people like Les Lane from Blackbutt, they would realise how hard these people work, good community members. It was interesting to hear some of the comments from the other side of the House, but they did seem to deliberately skip over the fact that these rural fireys probably work a lot harder than many other people given that they are also community volunteers. I want to give a great big shout out to all of my rural fireys. I want to thank them for everything that they did to make sure that common sense prevailed. It was the rural fireys who really did bring this home, which was fantastic.

I really do need to speak about the diabolical changes to the workers compensation laws. It is incredible to me that we have had to sit here in the House and listen to those opposite in the Labor Party seriously try to make out that the LNP are just ripping away all of these rights. It is incredible to hear the Labor union lawyers over there trying to make out that this is what the LNP are wishing for and that we are against workers' rights, but this is exactly what we are fighting for. It would be lovely to hear from one of the Labor people who understands that businesses employ people. Small business is a great example. A coffee shop in my electorate saved \$1,800 per annum in his little coffee shop. One of my larger abattoirs saved \$2 million a year, Mr Deputy Speaker, and I do appreciate that you are interested. How many employees would that \$2 million employ? It is incredible. It is quite simple to me and yet these people do not understand.

I think that it is interesting to look at the percentages in the other states: New South Wales, 15 per cent; in Victoria a worker requires a serious injury certificate of at least 30 per cent. I am pretty sure that Victoria has a Labor government. It is incredible, Mr Treasurer. You really should be looking at the other states: Tasmania, 20 per cent. Queensland has five per cent but this goes right down to zero, so let us look at some of those figures from the workers compensation statistics.

Ms Grace: You do not even know what you are talking about.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I would love to take that interjection from the member for—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Furner): Order! Pause the clock. Can we have some quiet in the chamber? I am quite interested in this. The member for Nanango has the call.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I thought you were going to say the member for Brisbane Central, because I was going to say that she does not know what she is talking about. But then that would be a bit tit for tat, wouldn't it? The Australian Meat Industry Council stated in their submission—

Governments, however, are elected to govern for all the people and all interests. That includes employers who provide the jobs that drive the economy ...

Increased costs to business invariably result in fewer jobs. It is absolutely incredible to me that those on the other side do not seem to appreciate what they will have to say to their small businesses when they go up by 18 or 20 per cent, when their medium sized businesses go up by 18 to 20 and per cent and when their larger businesses go up.

I see the Treasurer over there laughing away, because whilst he is eating into the big reserve that has been left for him will he transfer the debt over to one of the GOCs or something? It will be interesting to see what the Treasurer is planning to do after he eats away at Queenslanders' workers compensation reserves. It is a shame that we now have a government that will not stand up for workers and employers and a government that certainly will not stand up for business.

 **Mr GORDON** (Cook—Ind) (12.53 am): It gives me considerable pleasure to rise in support of the restoration of common law rights for injured workers in the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2015.

I understand that Queensland has a unique workers compensation scheme. It is the only state or territory in the country with a centrally funded short-tail scheme. The maximum period of time that a worker can receive benefits is between two and five years; however, this short tail is offset by the ability of injured workers to seek fair damages at common law. This was the system that operated in Queensland from 1915 until 2013. It was a good system and it was a fair system. Under the former LNP government, the parliament's Finance and Administration Committee conducted a 12-month inquiry into the operation of the Queensland workers compensation scheme.

After considering all of the arguments for and against imposing a threshold to access common law the committee considered that a threshold should not be introduced. Even the LNP dominated committee agreed that a threshold should not be introduced. The committee noted that imposing a threshold on exercising common law rights would improperly remove rights from one group of citizens that are available to other citizens; however, the previous LNP government ignored the strong views of the committee. They also ignored the views in the vast majority of submissions received.

On 15 October 2013 amendments were introduced by the then LNP government which imposed a greater than five per cent threshold to access common law damages for an injury caused through employer negligence. No expansion of the statutory benefits was provided to offset the change. This was most unfair. This bill seeks to restore fairness. Some of these affected injured workers have not been able to return to the workplace. Proponents of the threshold argue that they only apply to minor injuries, that is, injuries which are assessed to a degree of permanent impairment of five per cent or less. However, impairment does not take into account the disability caused by the impairment, the impact on a person's earning capacity or their ongoing treatment and care requirements.

For example, of the 2,900 notices of assessment for workers injured after 15 October 2013, 14 per cent of these workers are classified as not having returned to work and 66 per cent of these assessments are below the threshold. Of the workers who do not meet the threshold and have not returned to work, 49 per cent have not been paid a statutory lump sum. It is simply unfair to deny workers who are injured due to the negligence of their employer and who are unable to return to work to provide for their families access to compensation for future medical costs and economic loss just because their impairment is below an arbitrary threshold.

While other jurisdictions have higher common law thresholds or do not allow access to common law, most Australian jurisdictions operate long-tail schemes that pay benefits for the duration of a worker's incapacity with heavily restricted or no access to common law remedies. Due to these variations in the structures of different jurisdiction schemes, it is not possible to make a direct comparison between the different common law thresholds applied. However, without the ability to take

an injured worker's personal circumstances into account, a five per cent threshold is no fairer than the 15 per cent threshold that applies in New South Wales or the 30 per cent threshold that applies in Victoria. It simply abolishes a person's legal rights.

My understanding is that the Victorian threshold, for example, is able to be circumvented by a narrative test and a court can waive the threshold where special circumstances exist. I am advised that around 90 per cent of common law claims in Victoria are allowed under the narrative test. Removing the threshold will restore the balance in Queensland's short-tail statutory compensation scheme through access to common law damages. Injured workers with a low degree of permanent impairment assessments whose ability to return to work may be impacted by their injury will again have access to common law.

Put simply, this bill is about giving injured workers the support they need to get back to work and provide for their families or be properly compensated. The greater than five per cent threshold imposed by the LNP is unfair and should be removed. I strongly commend the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2015 to this parliament, and I commend the Treasurer.

 **Hon. CR DICK** (Woodridge—ALP) (Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services) (12.59 am): I am delighted to speak tonight in support of the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill, which restores rights taken away from the workers of Queensland, vulnerable workers in particular, by the LNP government. It is a very significant legislative reform that this parliament is being asked to progress this evening, and I support it wholeheartedly.

Earlier this evening I had the very great misfortune to have to listen to the member for Kawana for an hour. That is an hour of my life that I will never get back. It was an hour of cliché, sloganeering, defamation of a whole range of people and distortion of the facts. As I said last night in a debate, the LNP never lets the facts get in the way of a fabricated, dishonest argument.

We had the whole LNP pantomime tonight. We had it all. We had the greedy plaintiff lawyers. Imagine that—the former first law officer of this state defaming lawyers. The former first law officer of this state came into the House and called plaintiff lawyers greedy plaintiff lawyers. No wonder he was so disrespected by the legal profession. No wonder he was so disrespected by the judiciary of this state because of the way he treated people, and that was all on display.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Furner): Order! Members on my left! We are nearly there.

Mr DICK: We are nowhere near finishing what I have to say about the member for Kawana. What did we get tonight from the member for Kawana? We got the defaming of lawyers. No wonder he was so disrespected by the legal profession. I served in the legal profession for three years. I know what the legal profession and judicial officers think of the member for Kawana. The worst Attorney-General in living memory is how they regard him. We had it all on display tonight. As Talleyrand said of the House of Bourbon, and so it could be said of the LNP tonight, they learned nothing and they forgot nothing.

The reason we are here tonight is to right the wrongs perpetrated by the LNP against vulnerable workers in this state. How did they do it? They came in here like thieves in the night to take things away from workers. What was the history? They introduced legislation on Tuesday, 15 October 2013 and rammed it through two days later. What was the history before that? They set up an inquiry conducted by the Finance and Administration Committee which thoroughly examined the benefits and disadvantages of imposing a threshold on common law claims. How long did that review take? It was a year of examination by a parliamentary committee set up by the LNP and chaired by them with an LNP majority. That committee came to the conclusion that it was too early to tell whether the amendments introduced in 2010 by the previous Labor government that I was proud to introduce into this parliament had done an effective job, and it recommended no change. But that was not good enough. That was not good enough for the member for Kawana when he was the attorney-general so he cooked up these reforms to punish injured workers, brought them into the parliament and rammed them through in three days. This is the party that holds itself up as the party that respects institutions and the monarchy. The former attorney-general could not wait to bring in Queen's Counsels. He could not wait to restore that when he was the attorney-general while wasting public money, and I will say more about that later.

The party that supposedly supports the institutions of state like the parliament abused this place because it thought it would be here forever. It thought it would be here for 10 to 20 years. They abused this place. Those of us who serve in this parliament know that we must respect the people of Queensland, as Labor governments always do. We respect the democratic process and we respect the

parliament. That is why this Treasurer and Minister for Industrial Relations has taken his time to get this legislation right. The history of this is all because of the way the member for Kawana conducted himself as a minister of state. The root cause of all of this—the punishment of injured workers, taking away their common law rights—comes back to the way he conducted himself as the attorney-general.

Mr Bleijie interjected.

Mr DICK: I sat in silence for an hour listening to the member for Kawana, but he cannot help interjecting now. The glass jaw of the member for Kawana is easily shattered. He is very happy to criticise and defame other people, but he cannot take it. He cannot take criticism. He is always complaining about it.

Let us look at the history of the member for Kawana and how he was regarded as the first law officer. What did Walter Sofronoff say about his conduct in briefing out confidential conversations with the second most senior judicial officer in this state, the President of the Court of Appeal? He said that his conduct was a matter for public alarm, his conduct was shocking and unacceptable. What did retired Supreme Court judge and Court of Appeal judge Jim Thomas say about the member for Kawana?

Mr WATTS: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order on relevance.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Mr DICK: You must understand how we got to this point with these egregious law reforms that punished workers. What did they do? They put a law through that said, if you are a worker, you would be compelled to disclose your workers compensation history—

Honourable members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Member for Woodridge, can you resume your seat. When there is quiet, we will continue. I will warn the next person who interjects.

Mr DICK: What did they do? They put a law through that punished workers. You were required to disclose to an employer your workers compensation history. But what happened to employers? They could have their claims history wiped. What an unfair and unbalanced system they introduced because of the way the former attorney-general and member for Kawana conducted himself. Shocking was how his behaviour was described by Walter Sofronoff, one of the most significant lawyers of his generation.

Mr RICKUSS: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Lockyer, what is your point of order?

Mr RICKUSS: Quarrelling, Mr Deputy Speaker. Under the standing orders, quarrelling is an offence to the parliament.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Mr RICKUSS: Under the standing orders quarrelling—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I have made my ruling, member for Lockyer.

Mr DICK: Nothing that the LNP does surprises me. They come in here condemn, complain and defame other people, but as soon as any criticism is levelled at them they are up on their feet taking points of order. The member for Lockyer constantly interjects across the chamber.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr DICK: They do not like it, Mr Deputy Speaker. There is one thing that the LNP does not like and that is the truth. They have never liked the truth. In relation to the member for Kawana, who was profligate with public money and spent \$15,000 on two helicopters that he billed to the department of justice—

Mr BLEIJIE: I rise to a point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Furner): Order! Member for Woodridge, please take your seat. There is a point of order on my left.

Mr BLEIJIE: My point of order is in relation to relevance under the standing orders. A minute ago the minister came in here and talked about the behaviour of members. Look at how he is carrying on now. I would suggest—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order. Take your seat.

Mr BLEIJIE: I seek clarification, Mr Deputy Speaker. How does a helicopter have anything to do with this workers compensation bill before the House?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I call the member for Woodridge.

Mr DICK: No wonder he wants to airbrush history. I would have thought that someone who conducted himself that way, who introduced this sort of legislation that the Labor government is repairing, would be silent for three years. We know for the last six months of his term as Attorney-General he was silent. They put him into a locked box, put him out in Western Queensland and said, 'Do not speak.'

Mr Watts interjected.

Mr DICK: The member for Toowoomba North does not like it. He is happy to bully other people in this House but he does not like criticism himself. They have all been talking about rural firefighters. We should all be putting on record tonight our support for rural firefighters and the amazing work they do for Queensland, but not one of them has apologised to the firefighters of Queensland they defamed during the Redcliffe by-election when they said they were strippers and a rent-a-crowd. That is what those opposite did. There was the member for Kawana on the polling booth demonising firefighters and now they come in here—

Mr WATTS: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Furner): Order! Just hold on, member for Woodridge. Member for Toowoomba North, what is your point of order?

Mr WATTS: Relevance, Mr Deputy Speaker. I am not sure that the Redcliffe by-election is mentioned in the long title or the detail of the bill.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: There is no point of order. The member was referring to firefighters. I call the member for Woodridge.

Mr DICK: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. History shows that the reforms put through by the previous Labor government had an effect that stabilised the workers compensation system which meant there was no need for any further reform.

Honourable members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: One moment, Minister. Minister, it is late. We have all had a fair go. I would ask you to be relevant in your response or resume your seat.

Mr DICK: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Referring to the reforms that were put through previously, they were overturned in 2013 for no other reason than to unbalance the system and to skew it against workers in this state. That now needs to be repaired by the Labor government, and of course what have we seen? Between 2009 and 2014 we saw a 15 per cent reduction in common law claims that are referable back to the reforms put through in 2010. What did we see? We saw a 15 per cent reduction in common law claims and total annual common law claim payments and the average cost of damages reduced by about 10 per cent. There was no reason for these reforms other than pure ideology—ideology designed to punish workers and to take away their rights, some of whom have never been able to work in their chosen profession. Even if it was a five per cent impairment, they may have never been able to work in their chosen occupation or profession or trade. That is how those opposite regard workers. But thank heavens we have the democracy we have in our state. The people of Queensland saw through the member for Kawana and they saw through that government and they punished them at the January 2015 election and changed the government.

Mr SPEAKER: Minister, I have given you an indication as to my feeling in relation to relevance. If you persist, I will ask you to resume your seat.

Mr DICK: I commend the bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Hinchliffe, adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT



Hon. SJ HINCHLIFFE (Sandgate—ALP) (Leader of the House) (1.12 am): I move—

That the House do now adjourn.

Pumicestone Electorate, School Chaplaincy



Mr WILLIAMS (Pumicestone—ALP) (1.12 am): Last Friday it was my pleasure to join 200-plus members of the Pumicestone community who are focused on being charitable and who took time out of their very busy schedules to attend a fundraising breakfast at the Sandstone Point Hotel for the chaplains in the Bribie Island area. Matt Golinski, the master chef who lost his wife and three daughters

in a tragic fire on the Sunshine Coast a couple of years ago, was the guest speaker. Matt Golinski took a long time to recover from the burns that he received trying to rescue his family from that fire. The burns covered 40 per cent of his body. Matt Golinski is an inspiration to us all, giving of his time travelling the speaking circuit encouraging everyone he meets through the adversity that he faced.

At the breakfast we raised \$27,600 towards the invaluable chaplaincy work that is done in our schools. The four schools in east Pumicestone include Beachmere State School, where Troy Juides is the chaplain; Bribie Island State School, where Ken Piva is the chaplain; Banksia Beach State School, where Ann-Maree Marsh is the chaplain; and Bribie Island State High School, with Tim Crawshaw as chaplain. These chaplains work very hard and are dedicated towards our young people and are magnificent in that they save lives. From providing breakfast for students who would normally go without to counselling students who have alcohol problems, drug problems, bullying problems and even problems in their own family homes, their efforts are quite often all that keep our youths from destroying their lives, and that in turn becomes an inherent cost to the state government having to spend copious amounts of money to restore their lives in future years.

It would be remiss of me not to mention the Caboolture chaplaincy dinner when I represented the Premier several months ago. The guest speaker at this event was Andy Gourley of Red Frogs fame. Red Frogs work tirelessly with our school leavers at schoolies events on the Gold Coast as well as overseas. On that night \$55,000 was raised—

(Time expired)

Multiculturalism

 **Mr FURNER** (Ferny Grove—ALP) (1.15 am): The weekend following budget week and the end of Ramadan I was alarmed to see gatherings of people at Reclaim Australia events across our nation. Conversely, I listened to Mr Abdul Gelim, the executive director and co-founder of the Queensland Intercultural Society, at the 2015 Peace and Dialogue Iftar Dinner and award ceremony held in parliament on the Thursday of budget week. One would be forgiven for wondering how two groups of Australians hold different positions on our country.

We are an egalitarian society believing in a fair go for all. We are a country that was built on the back of migrants from all parts of the world—a country that is tolerant and accepting of one another. Yet the Reclaim Australia events left me with many questions—questions like what we have to reclaim Australia from? Surely if anyone had a right to reclaim Australia it would be our Indigenous people.

Why do politicians need to comment, let alone attend these rallies? In particular, I direct my attention to federal LNP member for Dawson, George Christensen. He says ‘our voices say we will not surrender’. Surrender to what and whom? I find his attendance at these bigoted rallies as a politician extremely alarming. Elected members of parliament are elected to represent all of their constituents, not just those who can attract the farthest right-leaning side of our communities. The Prime Minister should now stand up and show leadership and send a clear message to the members of his government that attendance at these bigoted events is not acceptable. In Mr Abdul Gelim’s words, delivered in his speech at the iftar dinner in the Premiers Hall on Thursday night—

In an era where conflict seems to dominate the news headlines, the silent majority are continually working to remove prejudice, racism and bigotry and sowing the seeds of peace, compassion and respect.

We believe the best way to respond to local and international incidents is by positive action through dialogue and respect, even if you disagree.

How true! I would hope that we, as representatives of all Queenslanders, can work together for all Queenslanders despite their race, despite their religion and despite their culture or beliefs to foster peace and respect for all.

Going for Gold in September for Childhood Cancer

 **Mr LAST** (Burdekin—LNP) (1.18 am): Going for Gold in September is an initiative which raises awareness for childhood cancer and is now in its third year, thanks to the courage and determination of a young Ayr lady, Miss Keely Johnson. In 2013 then premier Campbell Newman was touched by a letter he received from Keely and her friend Declan Hegarty, both sufferers of childhood cancers. Sadly, Declan passed away, but the lighting of Queensland’s Parliament House and the Kurilpa Bridge for the month of September is a fitting tribute to Declan and continues today thanks to Keely, who is on a mission to turn gold as many monuments and buildings as possible and also to raise funds and cancer awareness. The fountain in Ayr is flowing gold and numerous businesses have agreed to spread Keely’s

message. Keely came into my Burdekin electorate office wanting to know if I could turn the Burdekin Bridge, also known as the 'Silver Link', gold in September. I approached TMR and, whilst it was unable to grant this request due to safety reasons, it was happy to make a contribution by promoting Going Gold in September for childhood cancer on the variable message sign installed at the bridge approaches.

Keely was diagnosed with a brain tumour at 13. After two brain surgeries, she was later diagnosed with central nervous system Langerhans cell histiocytosis, a rare blood cancer. Despite her own battles and spending the majority of the past four years in Brisbane receiving treatment, Keely has found time to raise a staggering \$500,000, which is a remarkable achievement and indicative of the passion and commitment of this young lady to make a difference. In April this year, she founded the Golden Octopus Foundation, which supports families of oncology patients and raises money for cancer research organisations. There are eight groups of childhood cancer and this is where the 'octopus' name came from: eight legs or arms embracing the eight representative groups. Currently in Australia we lose three children a week to a childhood cancer.

Keely has not only a heart of gold but also a golden voice, recording a song about cancer titled *Turn This To Gold* with her country music idol Lee Kernaghan, who is the Golden Octopus Foundation's ambassador. A main objective of the foundation is to improve facilities such as telehealth services and provide childhood cancer nurses to all regional areas to hopefully one day allow families to stay in their home towns instead of relocating to major centres where they often feel isolated and face added pressure on family finances and the health system. Named a 'Child of Courage' finalist in the Pride of Australia awards, Keely is a glowing gold ambassador with that true Aussie fighting spirit.

Wilsonton State High School, Arts and Sports Hall

 **Mr WATTS** (Toowoomba North—LNP) (1.21 am): I rise to talk about the Toowoomba State High School Wilsonton campus, which is one of my favourite topics because the poor students at the Wilsonton campus attend the largest campus in Queensland not to have an indoor sports facility. A lot has been said about this in my community. There is a lot of commentary. Some people are saying that the funding that I had secured was part of Strong Choices, which is completely incorrect. The money was in the budget clearly marked for capital works on the school campus. I am very disappointed and it is only the students and staff of the school who are more disappointed than me.

I acknowledge the effort of some of the staff: Christina Rogers and Principal Chris Zilm have worked very hard to bring this matter to the attention of both the department and the community of Wilsonton in Toowoomba, so that they can get what is expected on every other campus in Queensland of this size. Every other campus across our great state has a facility such as this, but since 1998, when the Wilsonton campus was opened, it has had no facility. I was first approached on this issue by the P&C represented by David van Tricht, Secretary Greg Spearitt and Executive Officer Melinda Dick. They spoke to me about this roughly eight months before I first started agitating publicly. In that time, I met with the former Minister for Education and the department, plans were drawn up, things were prepared, the ground was laid, the announcement was made, everything was in place, and then the funding was ripped away to be spent we do not know where. Which campus is more deserving than the largest in Queensland without such a facility? I am not sure.

Several petitions have been put into this place and I look forward to the minister's response to those petitions. I understand that the total number of signatories is 1,551, if you add those petitions together. As people would be aware, I have asked many questions in relation to this matter. Really all I need is justice for the kids of Toowoomba who attend the Wilsonton campus. They deserve the same facilities as those in schools throughout the electorates of every other member. I do not know why the students of Wilsonton are disadvantaged.

Holland Park State High School

 **Mr KELLY** (Greenslopes—ALP) (1.24 am): The year 2015 marks the 150th anniversary of the publishing of *Alice in Wonderland*, the novel written by Charles Lutwidge Dodgson, who wrote under the pseudonym Lewis Carroll. It is considered by many to be a children's classic, but it is also exceedingly popular with adults. Many scholars argue that it is the best example of the genre known as literary nonsense. I suspect that it is a genre that we in this place could excel at if we turned our minds to it.

During this anniversary year, it is fitting that Holland Park State High School chose the story for its school production. Holland Park State High School has as its motto 'Learning, respect, cooperation'. All of those were on display when I recently attended a school production of *Alice*. It was a truly

magnificent event from which my entire family gained a lot of joy. Students were involved in every aspect of the production: hospitality, ushering, back of house production, music, set design, costume making and, of course, acting. The Mad Hatter's Tea Party, prior to the performance, added greatly to the evening.

The respect and cooperation shown by all students that we encountered were quite a natural part of the school community. Putting together a stage play requires a great deal of work, much cooperation and a great deal of respect for the roles that everyone has to play. The first word in the school motto, 'learning', was evident in every aspect of this production. The school community took the opportunity to include students in the production in ways that fitted with their interests. Students interested in construction and art built the sets. Students interested in design and fashion worked on the costumes. Students interested in music and sound engineering produced the wonderful music. Students interested in hospitality staged a fantastic Mad Hatter's Tea Party and kept us well provisioned at intermission.

The production reminded me of the value to a school community of focusing on the arts. I watched as my own children were enthralled by the production and I noted how the production fully absorbed the attention of all students involved. It reminded me of a Dodgsonesque quote by Thomas Merton, 'Art enables us to find ourselves and lose ourselves at the same time'.

I congratulate the school principal, Jocelyn Roberts; the director, Diane Pashen; the main actors, Krystyna, Darcy, Drew and Georgia; and all involved in making this a wonderful event. This event truly brought the entire school community together and invited the broader community to participate.

Sadly, since I first wrote this speech, the school has suffered a serious attack by vandals. The manager from Public Works said it was the worst vandalism he has seen in over two decades. The damage I witnessed was extensive. I am very pleased to report that the school was open for business on the next school day. I would like to thank the staff from Education Queensland and Public Works for their mighty effort in getting the school operational. It is a testament to the strength of this school community that they were able to take this in their stride.

Moggill Scout Group, Kenmore Girl Guides

 **Dr ROWAN** (Moggill—LNP) (1.26 am): Tonight, I rise to speak about the Moggill Scout Group and the Kenmore Girl Guides. Recently I attended the annual general meetings of both organisations.

The Moggill Scout Group was established in 1975 and had its den constructed in 1978 in Bellbowrie. Scouts take part in an extraordinary variety of outdoor activities, from traditional scouting skills such as camping and bushcraft, through to more extreme challenges such as abseiling, overnight hiking, rafting, rock climbing and sailing. Scouting is a worldwide movement that has shaped the development of youth and adults for more than 100 years. Community Scouts are the most successful youth organisation in Australia and the world. The Moggill Scout Group is definitely about fun, but it also prepares young people for life in the adult world by teaching responsibility for one's own actions. I pay tribute to Susan Grantham, group leader of the Moggill Scout Group, and her team of volunteers who give so freely of their time so that our boys and young men and women can challenge their bodies as well as their minds.

The Kenmore Girl Guides also has a proud history. In July 1962, a single Girl Guide unit began meeting at the Kenmore Presbyterian Church Hall. In 1967, the group moved to its current hut on Moggill Road in Kenmore and by 1980 it was one of the most significant districts in Queensland. From those humble beginnings, they continue to be one of the largest guiding districts in Australia, with nine units and over 200 members ranging in age from six to 86. Girl Guides is one of the largest organisations in Australia for girls and young women. It provides leadership and personal skills development to its 30,000 members, including 22,000 youth members. A strong and active presence in the local community, they are known for getting involved, whether that be baking thousands of Anzac biscuits and serving at the Kenmore Anzac Day Parade, serving water to the diggers on the Anzac Day march in Brisbane's CBD, collecting rubbish from the Moggill Creek catchment during Clean-Up Australia Day or raising funds for other worthy community causes.

Similar to the Scouts, the four main elements in the Guide program are: self—being a Guide is all about challenging oneself; physical—being active, healthy and strong; people—making friends, sharing and understanding others; and practical—learning some skills that will help you through life. All activities the girls do, from weekly meetings and camps to expeditions and hikes, are driven by the girls themselves with input and assistance from their leaders. I strongly recommend to parents that they consider joining up their children to one of those very worthwhile groups and maybe even volunteering

some of their own spare time to help out. My wife, Jane, certainly enjoyed her time as a Brownie and Guide in Kenmore and my step-daughter Charley has also developed great skills, particularly now having progressed to being a Ranger.

I would also like to acknowledge Region Leader Dot Dalglish and the committee of the Kenmore district for the very important community work they undertake. I am proud of their dedication and commitment and the terrific contribution they make to young people in the electorate of Moggill.

World Arts & Multi-Culture Inc.

 **Mr RUSSO** (Sunnybank—ALP) (1.30 am): Tonight I would like to talk about a fantastic local organisation in the Sunnybank electorate. As everybody is aware, my electorate is a culturally diverse community. World Arts & Multi-Culture Inc. has enriched our community with different traditional performances, cultural exchange and cultural harmony. I am taking this opportunity to highlight yet another milestone for one of the most active community organisations in Queensland. World Arts & Multi-Culture Inc., also known as WAMCI, is an organisation with a goal to promote multiculturalism through the demonstration and exchange of performing and visual arts. This organisation was originally founded in 2003 and recently, along with the member for Stretton, Duncan Pegg, I attended its 12-year anniversary dinner. From my understanding, turning 12 years old is very special in Chinese culture. Only by celebrating with red and vibrancy can one get good fortune and happiness throughout the year. WAMCI does exactly that.

It is always good to have a special connection with an organisation such as this. Its mission is to introduce different cultural activities to the Sunnybank electorate. Only the other day I discovered that we share more than just our passion towards the diverse electorate: we share the same Chinese zodiac sign. Maybe it is this special bond that creates such a good working relationship between the organisation and me. I would like to acknowledge president Maggie Lu, life honorary president Melody Chen, life honorary adviser Lewis Lee OAM, and every single hardworking member of WAMCI in enhancing the cultural diversity of Sunnybank.

To shortlist a few activities, their infamous lion dancing and drumming performances impressed the Premier, all the ministers and guests at the first Sunnybank and Stretton community cabinet. It was the first time that I ever had the opportunity to play the Chinese drums.

A government member: How did you go?

Mr RUSSO: Very well! The list continues with concerts, Lunar New Year celebrations, cultural lessons, food appreciation events and other performing and visual arts events. Many of these things would not exist in Brisbane without this fantastic community organisation. I congratulate the current and past executive team. Their dedication, enthusiasm and vision are really inspiring to our community. Thank you for all the hours you have contributed. I look forward to what you have in store for us in the future.

Visiting Medical Officers

 **Mr KATTER** (Mount Isa—KAP) (1.33 am): Two years ago I believe state parliament witnessed an unjust and unfair attack on visiting medical officers working in our public hospitals. I remind the House that VMOs are doctors in private practice who provide several hours a week of their time to help treat patients and play a vital role in the education of junior staff in our public hospitals. This non-unionised workforce comprises approximately 800 doctors across the state, many serving in rural and remote areas. *Hansard* records that on 20 August 2013 these VMOs were described as 'Tahitian princes'. It was also implied these VMOs were engaged in white-collar crime and were 'ripping the guts out of the health system to the tune of hundreds of millions of dollars', yet a subsequent report from the Auditor-General offered no criticism of VMOs.

It is reasonable to expect a government to offer a guide in direction and opinion, influence the community positively and set an example. In that way we parliamentarians earn the support of the community. Abusing the platform that has been provided to us by our constituency to contest the professionalism of VMOs while refusing to accept the consequences is not leadership. Furthermore, I note the VMO community believes it was given an inadequate response to the matter when the issue was raised during estimates.

VMOs enhance the medical profession by providing full-time medical specialist services throughout the state and are a valued employee group. I accept that parliamentary debate can at times be robust and challenging, however these statements should not remain as a permanent and

unchallenged record in *Hansard*. I commend the leadership of members of this community who have been extremely proactive in their efforts to correct the mistake. They feel these comments reflect poorly on this parliament and eventually on the community. These officers are fundamental for the ongoing viability of quality health care in the state of Queensland, especially within rural areas. A change in our attitude as parliamentarians is mandatory if we wish to have the community view its leaders with respect.

Despite a parliamentary retraction having been sought, none has been forthcoming. I rise today to offer a correction. Our VMOs are a hardworking, professional and loyal group in our healthcare system. The description of VMOs given two years ago in this House is inappropriate. I hope to give this profession the dignity it deserves. I acknowledge it is going to take time to rebuild the trust of our VMOs. I do not expect trust to be rebuilt overnight, but I hope this serves as an adequate response for the wider community of VMOs. I believe an apology is long overdue.

Domestic and Family Violence

 **Miss BOYD** (Pine Rivers—ALP) (1.35 am): Domestic and family violence has no place in our community. There is universal agreement from us in this place that it is a complex, multifaceted and critical issue, one that requires a cultural change and a total community response. Previously in this place I have informed the House of my commitment to eradicate domestic violence. Domestic and family violence is a violation of the basic right we all have to healthy, supportive and safe relationships and lives. When I addressed the House back in May and spoke of my recent visit to DVConnect I reported that 140 to 260 calls were being averaged overnight and these figures indicated a spike in the period from October 2014 to May 2015.

Yesterday we saw the Premier announce that the funding commitment for this year to the DVConnect helpline would be increased to \$5.1 million. This 24/7 crisis line is now receiving 400 calls per day. This extra funding will boost staffing and provide emergency accommodation and supplies to ensure DVConnect are able to answer all calls for help from women and men.

I consider it a good thing that Queensland women and men are seeking assistance and help and I hope that we see more of it. This week we have seen the fast-tracking of legislation to increase penalties for breaches of domestic violence orders, to ensure domestic violence is specifically recorded on a person's criminal history and to provide special witness status for victims in court.

Last week in Pine Rivers I held a community domestic and family violence prevention round table at the Pine Rivers State High School. There, with local community providers and community leaders, we discussed the challenge that domestic and family violence is for our community. We know that meaningful partnerships need to be built with the community and private sectors, because government cannot tackle this issue alone. My round table in Pine Rivers is part of that consultation process. At the round table we spoke about the shared vision for our community in eradicating domestic and family violence. We discussed how we can shift attitudes locally, what an integrated support system looks like, how we can best form community partnerships and what gaps exist in the services in Pine Rivers. Additionally, the round table allowed for community services and leaders to form connections with one another in a way that had not been seen before. I am hopeful that with the investment from the Palaszczuk Labor government we will continue to see more investment in this area and implementation of the *Not now, not ever* task force review from Dame Quentin Bryce.

Nanango Electorate, Celebrating Lynda

 **Mrs FRECKLINGTON** (Nanango—LNP) (1.38 am): Tonight I want to speak about a very special and important event happening in Kingaroy this weekend. This weekend on Saturday, 19 September at around 4 pm the people of Kingaroy and across the South Burnett will be Celebrating Lynda—coming together to celebrate the amazing life of Lynda Geiger and her inspiring story in fighting terminal melanoma cancer. Lynda Geiger and her husband, Darren, have three boys, Chris, Adam and Joe. They have always been heavily involved in our community and Darren has been a local primary school teacher for many years. Sadly, at just 46 years old Lynda was diagnosed with melanoma cancer about 12 months ago. It has been a rough ride for her family ever since, with many ups and downs.

People who live in Queensland have some of the highest rates of melanoma in the world. Over 10,000 cases are diagnosed each year, with 25 per cent of those being in Queensland. Melanomas appear as a mole or a freckle and change colour, size or shape and are the most dangerous type of skin cancer. They spread rapidly throughout the body, often resulting in a poor survival rate. Lynda Geiger, in her usual selfless manner, has never given up. She wanted to do more to prevent others

from ending up in her situation so she established a fundraising campaign called the Lynda Geiger Young Mums fund to raise money for the Melanoma Awareness Foundation. Lynda has had some pretty tough news very recently, so our community has brought forward this Lynda Geiger event to bring the community together to share the memories and laughs. Lynda will be there and we will be celebrating her philosophy: it is not the years in your life but the life in your years.

Question put—That the House do now adjourn.

Motion agreed to.

The House adjourned at 1.41 am (Thursday).

ATTENDANCE

Bailey, Barton, Bates, Bennett, Bleijie, Boothman, Boyd, Brown, Butcher, Byrne, Costigan, Cramp, Crandon, Crawford, Cripps, D'Ath, Davis, de Brenni, Dick, Dickson, Donaldson, Elmes, Emerson, Enoch, Farmer, Fentiman, Frecklington, Furner, Gilbert, Gordon, Grace, Harper, Hinchliffe, Howard, Jones, Katter, Kelly, King, Knuth, Krause, Langbroek, Last, Lauga, Leahy, Linard, Lynham, Madden, Mander, McArdle, McEachan, McVeigh, Miles, Millar, Miller, Minnikin, Molhoek, Nicholls, O'Rourke, Palaszczuk, Pearce, Pease, Pegg, Perrett, Pitt, Powell, Power, Pyne, Rickuss, Robinson, Rowan, Russo, Ryan, Saunders, Seeney, Simpson, Smith, Sorensen, Springborg, Stevens, Stewart, Stuckey, Trad, Walker, Watts, Weir, Wellington, Whiting, Williams